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NFL
Playoffs
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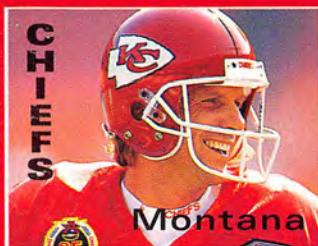
The Lakers and Celtics: After the fall from glory

INSIDE

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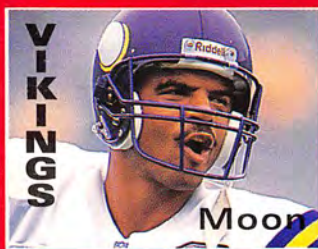
NFL Playoffs Preview

DALLAS IS DEAD



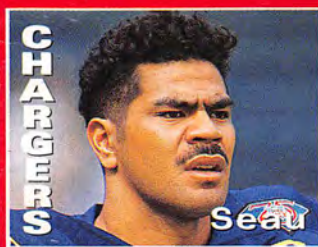
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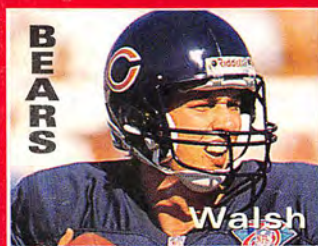
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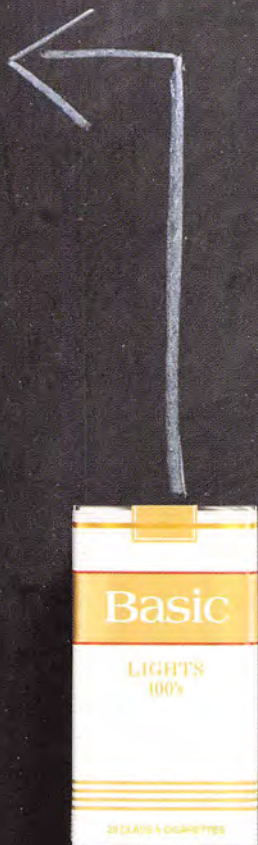
*Our experts
Mike Ditka
and Bob Trumpy
analyze the
playoff contenders
and predict the
winners and losers.
Both agree that
Steve Young and
the 49ers will end
the Cowboys'
Super Bowl reign*

January

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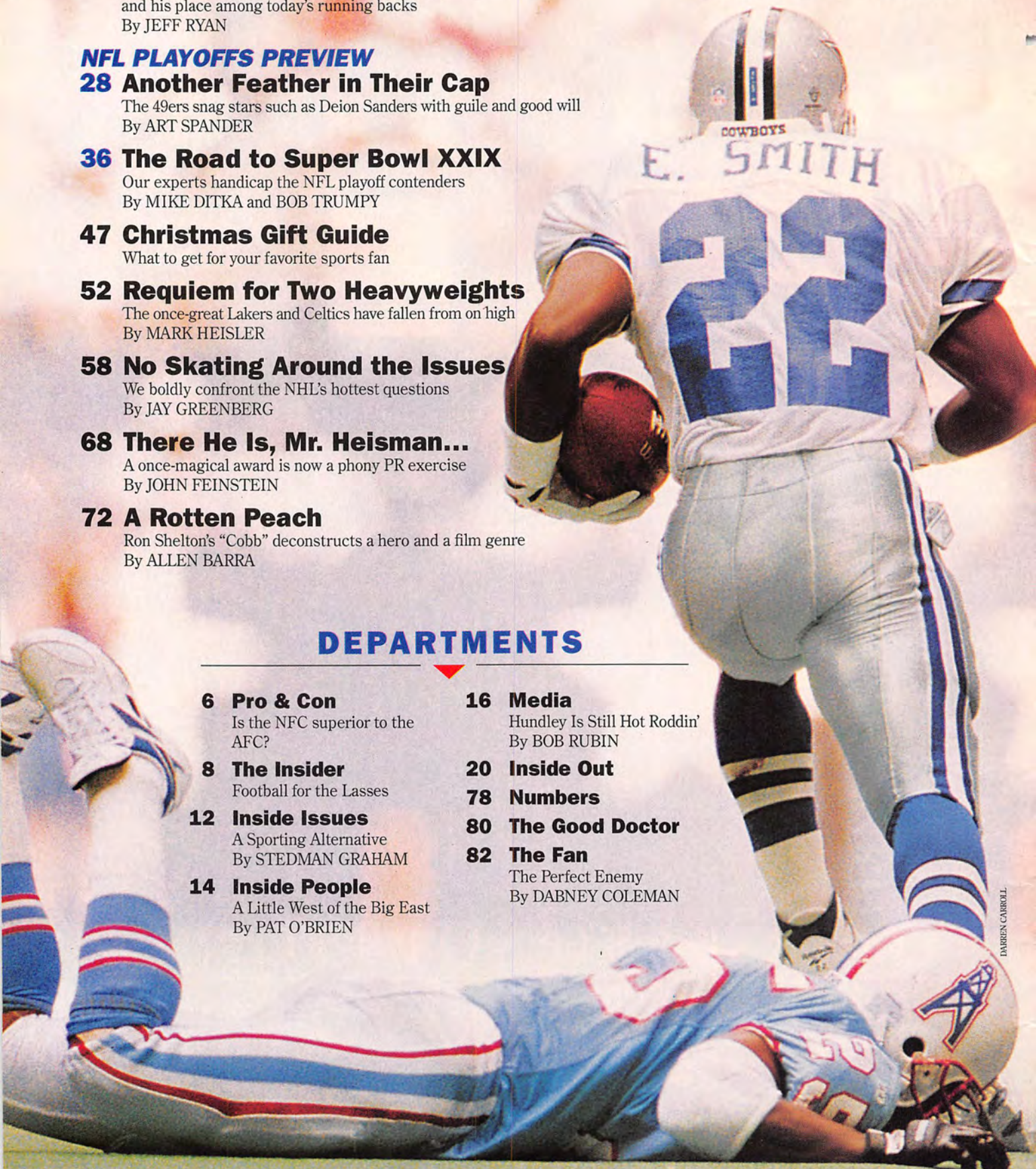
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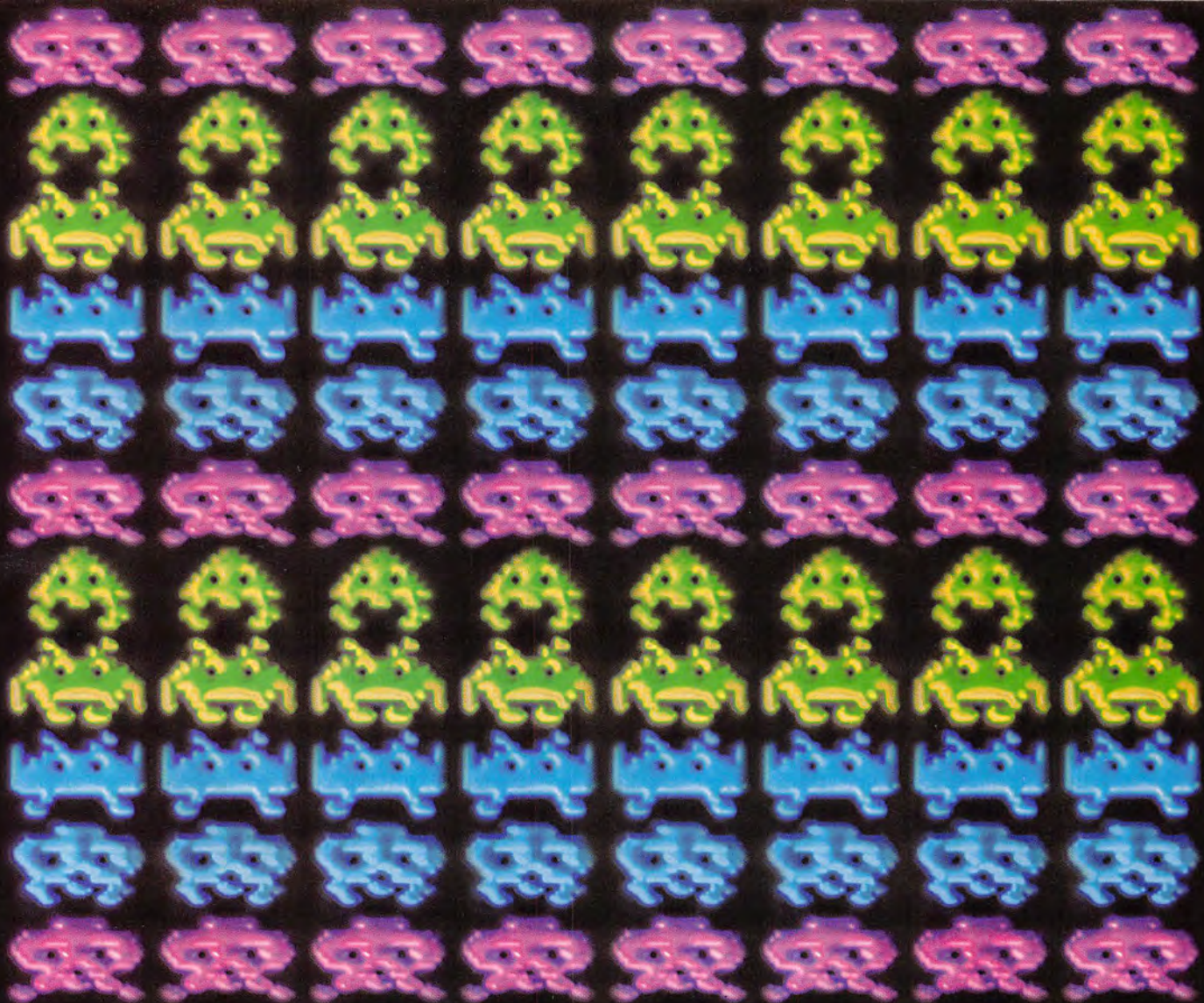
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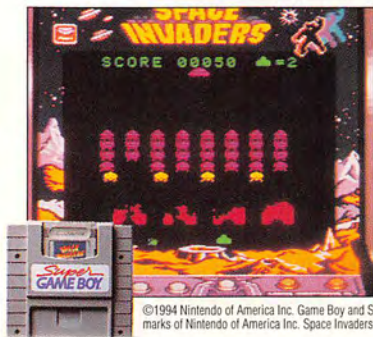


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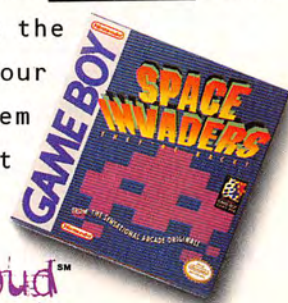


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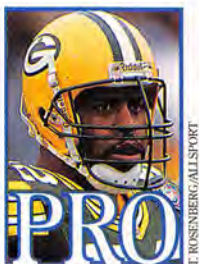


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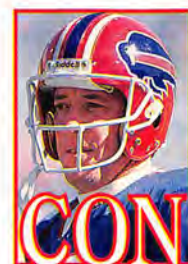
PRO & CON

Is the NFC superior to the AFC?

THE SUPER BOWL LONG HAS BEEN THE MOST-WATCHED SINGLE EVENT IN AMERICAN professional sports, but some of the luster has been lost from the big game—or “big blowout,” as we might more accurately call it. The NFC has won the last 10 Super Bowls by a combined score of 379-155; the AFC’s Buffalo Bills alone have lost the last four, the last three badly. Granted, the NFC dropped eight of 10 Super Bowls in the ’70s, during the era of the powerhouse Miami Dolphins and Pittsburgh Steelers teams, but only two of those games could be called routs. So after eight Super Bowl humiliations during a decade of disaster for the AFC, we’re forced to ask the question: Is the NFC truly a better conference?



Reggie White of the Green Bay Packers, an eight-time All-Pro defensive end, believes the quality of play in the NFC is superior to that in the AFC. Buffalo Bills quarterback and four-time Pro Bowler **Jim Kelly** contends that it’s just a matter of time before the pendulum swings back to his conference. They spoke with associate editor MARK MANDRAKE.



White: Is the NFC superior? Count ‘em: 10 Super Bowls in a row. That speaks for itself, because it all boils down to championships.

The NFC, and the NFC East in particular, has dominated when it comes to winning championships, and that’s what you have to base any talk about superiority upon. Simply put, the best teams in the league have all come out of the NFC over the past 10 years—there’s no other way to explain it. You’ve got individually great players in the AFC, but the NFC has proved to be much stronger than the AFC when it matters.

Kelly: The AFC is not inferior by any means. It’s very easy for people to criticize and make generalizations when we’re down, but the AFC has as many talented players as the NFC does. Whether you can get those talented AFC players to all show up on the same day in late January and play their best football as a team is another story, but eventually the tables will turn. Before the NFC won 10 in a row, the AFC had its streaks, too.

White: The teams that win championships have super-

stars at many different positions who come through when they need to come through. The AFC had them back in the ’70s, when it was good, and it was a better conference back then. Now the NFC has the majority of superstars on its side.

Jim’s been in the league a long time. He’s a professional, and obviously he’s not looking at the Quarterback Class of ’83 [which included Kelly, John Elway, Tony Eason, and Dan Marino, the losing quarterbacks in nine of the last 10 Super Bowls] as cursed or something. I don’t believe the AFC is jinxed. The bottom line is that the NFC teams these AFC teams have been playing against just were better prepared.

Kelly: All the talk about me not winning the big one, or the Bills not doing it, or the Class of ’83 quarterbacks being cursed, or the AFC not being good enough, amounts to exactly that: talk. We’ve been listening to the cynics go after us for three straight seasons after the 1990 loss to the Giants, and we’ve rebounded each year and won another AFC title.

White: A big part of the AFC’s

negative trend is that Buffalo has gone four straight times to the Super Bowl and lost; the Bills consistently have been the most dominant team in the AFC in the ’90s, and they always wind up the second-best team in the NFL. With that in mind, I don’t know how you could argue the NFC is not superior.

Kelly: There probably is no way people are going to believe there is a parity between the conferences until the AFC actually goes out and wins a few Super Bowls in a row, but in regular-season matchups the Bills and other AFC teams regularly beat NFC teams that look better on paper. And if you look at other sports—the NBA or baseball—you’ll see that these championship streaks happen in both directions. Nobody calls one division in a sport a complete failure just because there is a dynasty in another division.

White: The reason the differences between the two conferences are starting to show up is that NFC defensive lines—and, for that matter, NFC offensive lines—have gotten stronger in recent years. That’s where the game is won:

on the defensive and offensive lines. Dallas has a lot of beef up front; Washington used to have a lot of beef up front. When Washington played Denver in Super Bowl XXII, for instance, the Redskins linemen were so much bigger than Denver’s that there was no way the Broncos could compete. The ’88 Bengals were an exception; they had a really big front when they played San Francisco in the Super Bowl. I thought they were going to win it all, but Joe Montana and Jerry Rice always are full of surprises.

Kelly: The style of play in the AFC isn’t much different from in the NFC. People point to the run-heavy, defense-oriented game of the NFC East as the key to the championship. Well, you can’t argue with success, but there are teams in the AFC that play that way. And Houston’s run-and-shoot and our no-huddle offense are no more wide open than San Francisco’s game was during its championship years. The best AFC teams play well on both sides of the ball, not just on offense or on defense. The NFC teams have had the upper hand for a while, but the trend can turn just as fast. ■

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Trends

Football for the Lasses

WHAT DOES THE WIFE OF AN NFL coach do while her husband is busy running his team? Jan Wannstedt, wife of Chicago Bears coach Dave Wannstedt, does a little coaching of her own.

Dave's mission is obvious: Win football games. Jan's mission? Win over potential football fans—more specifically, potential female fans who may have little feel for the sport. She regularly stages one-night clinics for women that provide a crash course in how football is played.

The couple were married in 1973, soon after Dave played his final game as an offensive tackle at the University of Pittsburgh. He has coached football since 1975, so the game inevitably has been a major element in Jan's life. "Dave and I have been together since high school [at Baldwin High in Pittsburgh]," Jan says. "Football always has been part of our lives. I've never known anything else. I've learned to appreciate the game more as I've become older."

Many people attend Wannstedt's seminars to find out what the football fuss is all about. "Most women come out of curiosity," Jan says. "The majority of the women have said they come because they know nothing about football, and they want to see why their

husbands enjoy it so much.

"I started the clinics because football is the one sport most women never have played. If I can teach them some little things about the game, they'll have a bet-



ter understanding of what they're watching."



Wannstedt [left] introduces football—literally—to female fans, who also get some up-close instruction from players.

Jan began the clinics in 1989 in Dallas, where Dave was defensive coordinator of the Cowboys, and she continued them in Chicago when he was named coach of the Bears in '93. Proceeds of the seminars, audiences for which have numbered up to 600, go to charity.

Fashion

Of Logos and Lucre

WHEN THE EXPANSION NEW York Mets were creating a uniform in the early '60s, they chose orange and blue as their colors to honor the memory of the city's two recently departed baseball teams, the New York Giants and Brooklyn Dodgers. It was a great idea at the time, but if the Mets were fledglings in search of a color scheme today, that idea probably would be laughed out of

their corporate board room.

"Years ago, sports teams designed uniforms using narrow criteria," says Tom Mayenknecht, director of communications for the Toronto Raptors. The Raptors, along with the Vancouver Grizzlies, will begin play in the NBA in 1995. "The colors were ones the owner liked or ones that had local symbolism. That changed in the mid-'80s, with a merchandising boom. Now it's mainstream demand that dictates the colors. Team merchandise has emerged as a part of pop fashion."

As a result, selecting colors for a new pro franchise has become a science requiring the input not just of designers and fashion consultants, but of market researchers, apparel manufacturers, and focus groups. The right decision can mean a windfall. Consider: Worldwide sales of NBA merchandise climbed from a total of \$115 million during the '84-85 season to \$2.8 billion for '92-93.

The Raptors spent \$750,000 in their search for colors they hope

will be big sellers. The team relied heavily on focus groups in Canada and the United States, and on advice from licensees such as Starter and Raven's Knit. The Grizzlies surveyed various consultants and researched which colors have been most popular with tourists who visit Vancouver and purchase souvenirs of the city and its attractions.

"We were looking to transcend the sports industry," says Larry Donen, managing director of Winning Spirit, the merchandising division of the Grizzlies. "Fashionable colors tend to come and go. We wanted something that will be long-lasting—and look good on television."

The Grizzlies settled on a combination of turquoise, bronze, red, black, and white. The Raptors will be trimmed in red, purple, silver, and black. Each team's uniform has elements of proven success in them. Turquoise, or teal, has been a mall-to-mall sales hit for the San Jose Sharks, Florida Marlins, and Charlotte Hornets.



And in recent years, the Chicago White Sox and the Los Angeles Kings realized that a switch to silver and black on the uniform meant more green in the cash register.

Says Mayenknecht, "To a large extent, the environment shapes how a team will dress today, especially an expansion team."

It makes you wonder: Had Pittsburgh's NFL franchise and Chicago's NHL team been conceived nowadays, might we be cheering for the Pittsburgh Tealers and the Chicago Silver and Blackhawks?—Jeff Ryan



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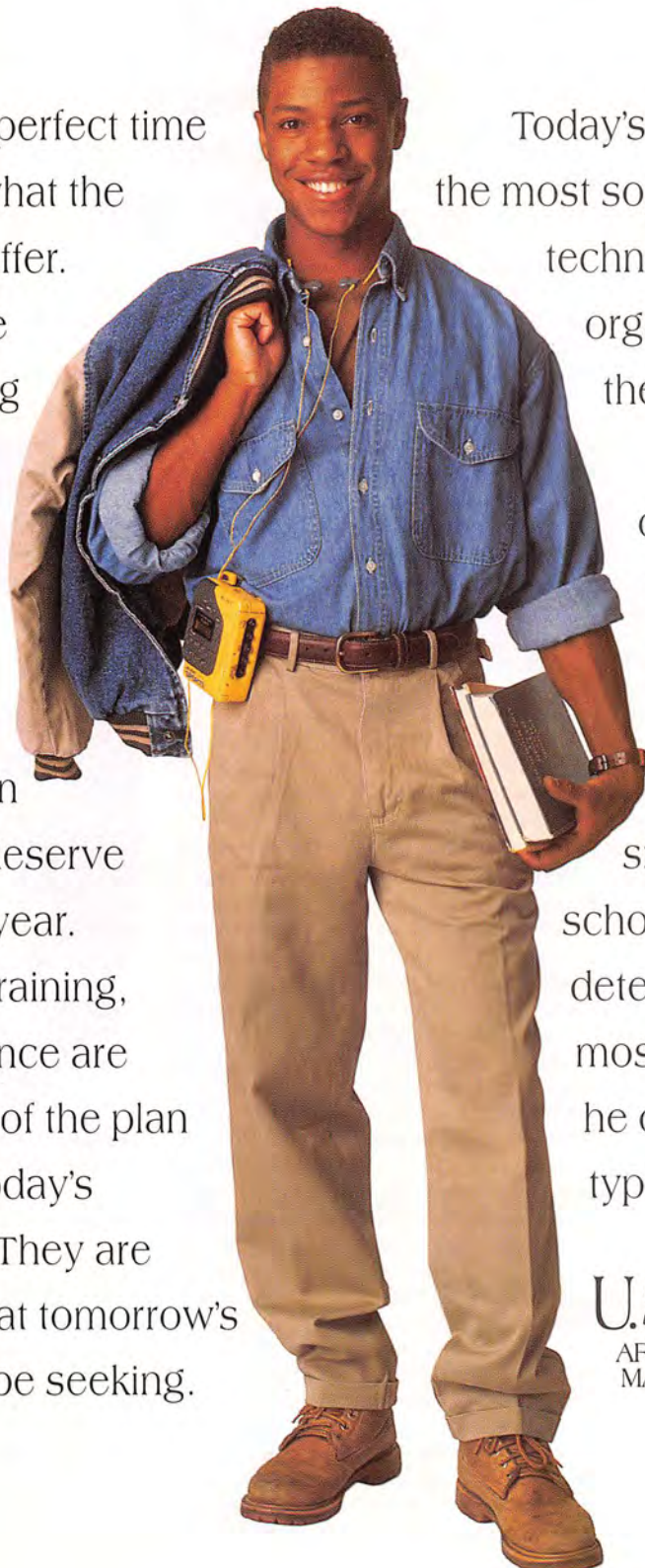
Although the military is getting smaller, the Armed Forces still need to recruit almost 400,000 young men and women for Active and Reserve positions each year.

Education, training, and job experience are important parts of the plan to restructure today's Armed Forces. They are also exactly what tomorrow's employers will be seeking.

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The clinics cover every aspect of the game, from blitzes to audibles. Before delving into the technical stuff, however, she starts at square one. Wannstedt kicked off a recent clinic by holding a football in front of the crowd and asking: "How many of you know what this is? It's not a purse, although I think we could do something with it."

Jokes aside, Wannstedt takes her task seriously. She prepares for her classes by watching (what else?) Bears games, combing through books, and consulting (whom else?) her husband. "Dave's my best teacher, of course," Jan says. "I've also called officials to get information. I've checked out books at libraries. I'll take notes when I'm watching football games."

Aided by projectors, drawing boards, and several Bears players, Wannstedt dispenses an abundance of information that novices and seasoned fans alike can find useful. Heck, even the players learn a thing or two. "The funny thing is, she knows more about football than I do," says Bears defensive tackle Chris Zorich, a regular participant in Wannstedt's clinics. "Having the opportunity to bring more people into football is a great thing."

The seminars, delivered to highly partisan crowds, also serve a personal purpose for Wannstedt. She mixes in subtle tips aimed at helping her husband's team fully exploit its home-field advantage at Soldier Field. While explaining the function of a huddle, for instance, she tells her students,

"You want to be quiet when the offense has the ball so they can get the plays into the huddle."

Who knows? Someday, maybe one of those plays will have been drawn up by the coach's wife.

—William Wagner

Issues

The NHL's Slow but Steady Thaw

IN JANUARY 1958 AN NHL rookie named Willie O'Ree made sports history. When O'Ree played right wing for the Boston Bruins, he became the first black to appear

in an NHL game. O'Ree was sent to the minors after one more appearance, but he played in 43 games and scored four goals for the Bruins in the 1960-61 season before returning again to the minors, where he spent the remainder of his career.

Thirteen years went by before another black player made it to the NHL. The United States hails Jackie Robinson and Larry Doby as sports pioneers, but until recently O'Ree was an obscure footnote, a trivia answer.

However, his name is resurfacing in hockey circles lately, a newfound fame corresponding to the dramatic rise—a tenfold increase, in fact—in the number of minority players in the NHL in the '90s. Between O'Ree's last game in '61 and the start of the 1989-90 sea-

Update

Ryun Pushes a Sound Barrier

WHEN HE WAS THE WORLD'S fastest miler, Jim Ryun couldn't hear the footsteps behind him. And though he raced in front of tens of thousands of spectators in Olympic stadiums in Tokyo, Mexico City, and Munich, he sensed only a muted roar. Now Ryun, who was born with a 50% hearing deficit, hopes he can be an example and inspiration to hearing-impaired children.

As chairman and spokesperson for the Council for Better Speech and Hearing Month, Ryun has been touring the country under the sponsorship of the ReSound hearing aid company, encouraging youngsters with hearing problems to look beyond their disability, and raising awareness of new technologies that offer promise for the hearing-impaired.

"For me this is an opportunity to work with young children especially, and hopefully give them some encouragement and inspiration," says the 47-year-old Ryun, who lives in Lawrence, Kan. "I want to give them an opportunity to see that there is a brighter day coming."

Ryun's example is a strong

one. He was the first person to run the mile in less than four minutes as a high school student, first doing so in 1964 as a junior from Wichita East High School. Later that year, at age 17, Ryun competed in Tokyo in his first Olympics. In 1965 he ran the mile in 3:58.3 in a high school meet—now the oldest existing record in high school track and field. In 1967 Ryun set a world record in the mile of 3:51.1, a mark that stood for nine years. He also held world records in the 1500 meters and 880 yards during the late 1960s.

Though one of the dominant middle-distance runners of his time, Ryun never won an Olympic gold medal. Hampered by a cold in Tokyo '64, he failed to qualify for the final. In the high altitude of Mexico City in 1968 Ryun finished second to Kenya's Kip Keino in the 1500; Keino had the advantage of training in the mountains of his native land.

But many people best remember Ryun for his tumble off the track at the Munich Games in 1972—a fall that cost him his final shot at Olympic gold. Ryun was the favorite in Munich, but during a semifinals heat a simple brush by another runner caused Ryun to lose his balance and fall backward onto the track with Billy Fordjour of Ghana.

"The loss of hearing greatly affected my equilibrium," Ryun says. "Other runners who have a

normal sense of balance wouldn't be so easily tipped over. I'm kind of like being on stilts.

"It's not the first time that I had been bumped in a race and fallen or stumbled, but it was certainly the most significant one because it happened to be the Olympic Games."

For Ryun, however, the prospect of a one-on-one interview with Jim McKay or Howard Cosell was far more frightening than a fall. His hearing problem often prevented him from understanding reporters—and caused him to fear that if he misunderstood a question, his answer might sound foolish.

"The question you think you hear isn't necessarily the one that was actually asked because you misunderstand due to the hearing loss," Ryun says. Nowadays he finds those experiences are the most useful in encouraging deaf and hearing-impaired students to excel in school. "I can identify with them—their sense of not want-



The great miler works to inspire kids who, like him, are hearing-impaired.

ing to be embarrassed in the classroom."

While Ryun may never forget the disappointment he felt lying on that track in Munich with his dreams of gold fading away, he receives more valuable rewards every day in his work with children. "It's exciting to see how just a few moments spent with them can have real impact and give them some hope," he says.

—Kent A. Schacht

son, just 17 minority players saw ice time in the NHL; in contrast, nearly every NHL team has fielded at least one minority player since the beginning of the 1990-91 season.

Some minority players—including Dirk Graham of the Chicago Blackhawks, Graeme Townshend of the Ottawa Senators, and Dale Craigwell of the San Jose Sharks—prefer to downplay their ethnic backgrounds. “I’m just a hockey player,” Townshend once said. “I’m a human being playing this sport. The fact that I’m black—it doesn’t make any difference what color you are.” Other minority players welcome the focus on their heritage. Jim Paek of the Ottawa Senators, the first Korean-born NHL player, proudly allows his jersey to be displayed in the Hockey Hall of Fame.

Many NHLers think minority players are rare because few ever got started in the game. “When you talk about a black hockey player becoming successful, a big stumbling block is that it’s a very expensive sport,” says Tony McKegney, who scored 200-plus goals for seven teams from 1978 to ’91. “It isn’t like basketball, where you can pick up a ball and just go play. You’re looking at \$250 to \$300 in equipment that has to be upgraded every three years or so—not to mention the fact that most hockey rinks are located in suburbia, which is predominantly white.”

Another hurdle, frankly, is bigotry. In 1987 Eldon Reddick, then a goaltender for the Winnipeg Jets, was delayed from entering Madison Square Garden for a game against the New York Rangers when security refused to believe a 5’6”, 160-pound black man could be a professional hockey player. In 1989 then-NHL president John Ziegler disciplined the Rangers’ Kris King for yelling racial epithets at Townshend, who was skating for the Bruins. In 1992 the admissions board of a Buffalo-area country club refused membership to a black man named Grant Fuhr, then reversed its position upon discovering Fuhr was an NHL goalie who probably be in the Hall of Fame someday.

O’Ree, who played before the civil rights revolution of the 1960s, endured indignities almost daily. “They’d test me by saying, ‘You don’t belong here, nigger,’”

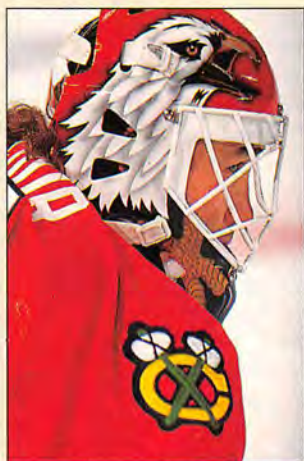
Style

Saving Face, With Pizzazz

A HOCKEY GOALTENDER’S mask is his calling card, a reflection of his personality. Given that, it’s not surprising that only a handful of craftsmen have the talent and know-how to satisfy today’s finicky NHL goalies. Of those, one stands out.

Greg Harrison of Brampton, Ontario, outside of Toronto, creates masks of multilayered fiber glass from scratch for clients such as Felix Potvin of the Toronto Maple Leafs, Mike Vernon of the Detroit Red Wings, Ed (the Eagle) Belfour of the Chicago Blackhawks, Bill Ranford of the Edmonton Oilers, Kirk McLean of the Vancouver Canucks, and Mike Richter of the New York Rangers.

The painstaking process of



Eddie the Eagle's headgear offers beak protection.

O’Ree once said. “I learned to let it go in one ear and out the other.”

The problems weren’t only from whites. John Saunders, who was a bruising defenseman in college with Michigan and Western Michigan before moving on to the safer occupation of sports broadcaster, experienced the Catch-22 of being black and a hockey player. “As an 18-year-old kid trying to do his best at college hockey, naturally I just wanted to fit in with the team, hang out with the other players,” Saunders says. “But race

building a mask takes from 45 to 60 hours, and the final product can cost a goalie as much as \$1,500. “I’m a picky bugger,” says Harrison, who has built goalie masks for 25 years. “It has to be done right, or I won’t take the job. I usually don’t get them done as quickly as [the goalies] want, but that’s the way it goes.”

“I don’t profess to be the best airbrush artist in the world, but in my opinion anyone can take an airbrush and go nuts. You have to consider how the mask will look on television and how it looks at various angles, or it’s not worth anything.”

Michel Lefebvre, a mask producer from Montreal who supplies goalies Stephane Fiset of the Quebec Nordiques and Dominic Roussel of the Philadelphia Flyers, praises his fellow artist. “Greg is one of the best in the league as far as concept and design,” Lefebvre says. “He’s very artistic.”

Three Hall-of-Famers are central to the history of mask use in the NHL. Clint Benedict, who played 13 NHL seasons and appeared in 48 postseason games, donned the first goalie mask to protect a broken nose while toiling for the Montreal Maroons in the 1920s.

Three-time First Team All-Star Jacques (Jake the Snake) Plante was the first goaltender to wear a mask regularly. Plante, who won six Vezina trophies as the league’s best goalie, began wearing his mask in 1959 with the Montreal Canadiens after he, too, suffered a broken nose.

The first “novelty” mask may have been that of longtime Bos-



Harrison is the man behind many an NHL mask.

ton Bruins netminder Gerry Cheevers. In the ’70s he gained note by taking a marker to his mask and drawing suture marks where he had been hit by pucks.

These days intricate mask designs are setting new standards in craftsmanship each season. Harrison likes best the one he did for Mark Fitzpatrick of the Florida Panthers. “I did a tuft of fur on the breast of the panther, and there are claws to each side,” he notes.

Other favorites are those he has done for Belfour and for another Blackhawks netminder, Darren Pang, now retired. “Panger’s may have been the nicest one I’ve ever done,” Harrison says. “He had an Indian headdress, like a war bonnet. With Belfour, I like the claws of the eagle on the bottom of the mask.”

Asked what sharp creations were on the way, an eager Harrison had to bite his tongue. The last thing he wants to do is give away upcoming surprises.

—Matt Nilles

relations in the 1970s weren’t all that good, and I went through a period of being ostracized by both races. All the white athletes could see was this black Canadian kid intruding, and the black athletes wanted to know why I was hanging around with white guys in a white sport.”

Although hockey has no formal recruiting program that focuses on minorities, an increasing number of young players of diverse racial backgrounds have been popping up in amateur leagues

and at NHL training camps in recent years. Hockey insiders believe that as more minorities try out, more inevitably will make NHL rosters.

“The main reason there haven’t been more blacks in pro hockey until now is that not many played at the amateur level,” Saunders says. “Will you ever reach a situation like football or basketball? I don’t think so. But you definitely will see more minorities in the future of the NHL.”

—Mark Mandrake

By STEDMAN GRAHAM

The Sporting Alternative



A STUDY AMONG Virginia high school students showed that more than one of every four teenagers had carried a gun, knife, or club to school at least once during the previous month. More than a quarter of the state's

high school students regularly engage in serious drinking. And 26% of Virginia's teenagers said they seriously considered suicide during the past year.

Why is life for America's teenagers and pre-teens so troubled, so desperate, so dangerous? This nation has a crisis on its hands, one that rapidly is worsening. When I've made that comment previously, some have called me an alarmist. They say that today's young people are not all that different from kids of previous generations, who were known to sneak a cigarette or a can of beer every now and then.

What's happening today is different. We're not talking about a little harmless youthful rebellion. As the streets become meaner than they've ever been, many of today's teens and pre-teens walk a fine line between life and death. Hard as it is to understand the causes of the developing domestic crisis, it's even tougher to come up with solutions. What do we do to make certain that our kids don't die or go to prison before they have a chance to live? I believe an answer can be found in sports.

In a recent survey conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the New York City Department of Health, more than one of every three New York City high school students said they feel physically threatened during the school year. Almost half of the city's high school students said they believe having a weapon at their side during school hours serves as an effective deterrent to violence.

I don't understand why we aren't talking more and doing more about using sports as part of the solution to the problems of youth violence and substance abuse. At a time when we need to give kids more productive outlets for their energies, some of

our educational systems and political leaders want to shut down those options.

To save money, many school systems around the country have begun to eliminate physical education classes and trim back after-school sports programs. During congressional debate over a national crime bill earlier this year, politician after politician derided programs such as midnight basketball leagues. Though the bill passed, it is by no means certain that any money will be provided to help keep such programs operating.

There's an inconsistency in our society that is hard to swallow. We want kids to spend their time constructively, but we don't seem to want to spend the money to provide any alternatives. In America today, health and fitness is a billion-dollar industry. We spend unimaginable sums of money on diets, exercise machines, and health club memberships. Corporate America is making a major effort to keep employees healthier in order to reduce absenteeism and increase productivity. We have made health a major national priority—except where our kids are concerned. We adults work hard to reduce our waistlines, but we also are reducing the opportunities young people have to pursue health and fitness rather than crime and delinquency.

During a recent school year, 700 weapons were found in and around Philadelphia's public schools. School and civic officials have purchased metal detectors and increased the police presence in the schools.

Is sports a real alternative? I think it is. Studies have shown that many young men join gangs in search of the solid social structure otherwise lacking in their lives. The gang has a definite hierarchy, with established leaders, rules, and responsibilities. The problem is that a gang life usually leads to a long prison sentence or an early grave. Sports offers an alternative structural foundation—one that also emphasizes leadership, being part of a team, cohesiveness, and competitiveness, but toward constructive ends.

Cleveland police have formed a Youth Gang Unit to quell violence and disruptions in schools. Cleveland police officials say the average gang member is 13 years old.

There is an old African saying that it takes an entire village to raise a child. Today in America, our villages are troubled places. We must reassert our concern for children and our desire to point them in the right direction. It is clear that instead of eliminating school sports programs and phys-ed classes, we should be finding resources to involve more kids in these productive endeavors. Instead of belittling midnight basketball programs, we should be thinking of more ways to get kids off the streets and onto the courts and fields where they can expend their energies while doing no harm.

We must move to hold our schools, civic and business organizations, and community recreation programs accountable for developing healthy alternatives to the streets for our children. Organizing sporting activities is an answer. The facilities are available, but paid professional staff



A sports team can be a kind of gang, but one that deals in bats and baskets, not bullets.

and motivated volunteers are needed to reinforce qualities such as teamwork, discipline, and fairness.

We need to marshal all our resources to address a growing national crisis. Sports is one of those resources. ■

STEDMAN GRAHAM is co-author of *"The Ultimate Guide to Sport and Event Management and Marketing."* His commentary on sports issues appears regularly.

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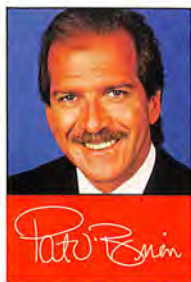
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By PAT O'BRIEN

A Little West of the Big East



THE GOOD NEWS first: He's closer to the Nike company store. Those trademark shirtsleeve sweaters they make in nearby Beaverton, Ore., with the swoosh over the heart will be as plentiful as the Portland

rain. The bad news: He's a five-hour flight from Il Mulino, the Italian eatery in Manhattan that has lost its best customer.

P.J. Carlesimo has moved his sweaters and his in-your-face coaching style to the Great Northwest. In becoming the new coach of the Portland Trail Blazers, Carlesimo left behind Seton Hall, the Big East, and 23 years of college hoops. He brought with him a knack for rebuilding, an impressive knowledge of basketball, and an intense passion for the city game.

But now the city has changed, and so have the players, and the media, and the restaurants, and the amount of time off between games. This classroom is a little different.

P.J. is encountering the difference between the two levels. "People who don't think Pat Riley or Rudy Tomjanovich or Chuck Daly or Phil Jackson are teaching—well, that's crazy," Carlesimo says. "Just because we're in this league doesn't mean you don't relate to players or give them plays or get in their way every once in a while. The better players will listen to anything that will help them play better."

Over the summer Carlesimo prepared for his new assignment the way a lot of people in this business prepare: He played golf. And while walking the links with Chuck Daly, Billy Cunningham, and former Seton Hall coach Bill Raftery, he got an earful of advice on the pro scene. "They told me you're not going to believe how tired you are going to get," Carlesimo says. "You're not going to believe how long the year is, how long every game is, how long this whole thing lasts. And they're telling me, 'P.J., with all this energy you have, it's just going to wear you out.'"

P.J. has upped his exercise routine and is

trying to adjust to a long schedule. "I suppose the No. 1 difference is getting used to playing the games without having two or three days to prepare each time," he says. "The biggest advantage in college is you play a game, and you normally have two or three days to get ready. That was always my biggest adjustment to the NCAA Tournament, that second game on the weekend. In this league you play the game, get on the plane, and you're playing the next day."

If you've read Carlesimo's clippings you know all the stories about him being in his players' faces, about him screaming. However, his friends and his players knew that the screaming was really tough love—and most of the time it worked. They loved him back. The question now becomes, how will Clyde Drexler and Cliff Robinson and

ferently, but I don't think the adjustment is going to be as big as a lot of people feel."

Well, so far, so good. Not many adjustments to make. The travel—maybe. A few dozen games more? No problem. Leaving the Big Apple for something called Rip City? Piece of cheesecake. However, unlike the college player who barely could afford a sandwich, the professional can buy not only the sandwich, but the store, too. So, Mr. Adjustment, what's it going to be like around all that money?

"Well, I wish I was one of them," Carlesimo says. (He's making a reported \$1.5 million a year, so he does have a way to go.) "People sometimes say that professional athletes are paid so much they lose their desire, or that money is what they play for, but I don't think guys play for money in any sport. Money is not what makes Michael Jordan tick or Patrick Ewing tick or Clyde Drexler tick. They want to win, and the ultimate thing is still the championship."

So Mr. Carlesimo goes to the Northwest. Those of us who have known him as the quintessential New Yorker will be watching for subtle changes. But as the coach points out: "It's still basketball. We're not talking brain surgery here. I don't think it's going to be this big adjustment everybody thinks it is."

The media coverage won't be the same. "No, but these guys are great," Carlesimo says. "We've got *The Oregonian* and a couple of other ones, and they seem fine. But the negative up here, if there is one, is that there's a tendency to make basketball more important than it is. It's still basketball, but in a town of 450,000 you're probably under the microscope more on a day-to-day basis."

"I'll miss the anonymity of the New York area. You can go underground in New York or New Jersey and kind of be yourself at times. That's difficult to do in Portland, the way they support the team on the floor and in the community."

"But it is a little bit of a trip around here—no question about that." ■

PAT O'BRIEN's insightful profiles of sports personalities appear monthly.



Carlesimo: "I'll miss New York's anonymity. You can go underground and be yourself."

the other Blazers react to it? "I think I've got a bit of an inaccurate rap," P.J. says. "I do get on guys, but when you have that rap and people watch a college game for 40 minutes, they're going to remember that. I don't think I'm much out of line with a number of guys already in this league who are very successful. I know these are older guys, professionals, and I'm dealing with men. Obviously, they're being treated dif-

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By BOB RUBIN

Still Hot-Roddin' After All These Years

ROD HUNDLEY GREW up in the dirt-poor coal mining country of West Virginia—only he was poorer than dirt. “I had nobody and nothing,” says Hundley. “To put it bluntly, I didn’t know when the hell I was going to eat my next meal.”

Hundley’s mother was a madam in a brothel; his father was an out-of-work meat cutter who drank heavily and hustled pool. Both parents had grade-school educations. They divorced when Hundley was a small boy, leaving him to be raised by strangers. “Best people in the world,” Hundley says of the folks who raised him, “but they had nothing and no chance in this world.”

If ever a kid seemed headed nowhere, it was Rod Hundley. Then he found a way out. One block from his house was a playground with a hoop, and when Hundley was 12 he began to play basketball. “It didn’t take me long to discover I was the best of all the kids playing, and I really stayed after it,” Hundley says. “When I got to high school and really got good, I used to talk to the ball. I’d say, ‘You’re going to get me out of here.’ I rode that ball, and I’m still riding it.”

At West Virginia University, Hundley became “Hot Rod,” a legendary player and showman. But in six NBA seasons with the Minneapolis and Los Angeles Lakers he was legendary mostly as a party guy. His disappointing pro basketball career over, he spent 3½ unfulfilling years as a Converse athletic shoes salesman, then was offered a job working alongside Chick Hearn as analyst on Lakers broadcasts. That was November 1967, and Hot Rod has been riding that ball ever since.



He's no longer an on-court razzler-dazzler, but Rod Hundley still shoots from the hip as one of the NBA's most colorful announcers.

Hundley worked Lakers games for two years, jumped to the Phoenix Suns for five seasons, then in 1974 became the first play-by-play man for the New Orleans Jazz. Make that first and only: After five seasons in New Orleans and now 16 in Salt Lake City, Hundley still is going strong—telling stories, making jokes, drinking prodigious amounts of beer, and rasping out his staccato play-by-play. He’s 60, in his 28th season as a broadcaster, and still loving it.

“Best job in the world,” he says. “People ask me, ‘Don’t you get tired of all that travel?’ I say, ‘Hey, it beats working.’”

Hundley’s rat-a-tat-tat style creates excitement. “I’ve had people ask me how I talk so fast,” he says. “I say, ‘Because I’ve got three kids who like to eat, and everyone wants my damned job.’ That’s true. The rumor is that Chick’s going to retire, and I’m going to take his place

with the Lakers. Every time that comes up, the Jazz get 50 calls from guys applying for my job. But I’m not going anywhere. I just completed a five-year contract and plan to sign on for five more. After that, I’ll play it by ear.”

Jazz fans will be delighted to hear that. Hundley is beloved in Utah, despite the seemingly odd match of the strait-laced, heavily Mormon population of Salt Lake City and the wisecracking, beer-guzzling Hot Rod. Hundley jokes about his popularity but is touched by it. “Amazing,” he says. “You gotta love it, baby.” That’s Hundley’s mantra: *You gotta love it, baby.*

Hundley has borrowed freely from Hearn, both in his machine-gun style and in his use of certain pet phrases: “yo-yo dribble,” “leaping leaner,” “frozen

rope.” Games that have been iced are “in the refrigerator.” Larceny? Hundley cheerfully pleads guilty.

“When Chick came to New Orleans for the first time after I had gotten the job with the Jazz, he said to me, ‘I hear you’ve been stealing some of my lines.’ I said, ‘Not some—I’ve stolen them all.’ I only steal from the master, baby.”

But Hundley’s sense of humor is all his own. Working a game at Boston Garden in 1979, he was talking with broadcast partner Frank Layden during a commercial break at halftime. Spotting a familiar figure in the stands, Layden said, “Rod, look at that son of a bitch Auerbach.”

Hundley warned, “Be careful, Frank, we’re on satellite. Anyone taking our feed can hear what you’re saying.”

“Satellite, shmatellite,” Layden responded. “I’d like to take that cigar of his and shove it—”

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"For god's sake, Frank," Hundley gasped. *"It's still lit!"*

Ten years later, Hundley was working a playoff game for TBS with Oscar Robertson. "Ladies and gentlemen," Hundley said to open the broadcast, "it was 29 years ago on a snowy night in Cincinnati when a coach said, 'Rod, tonight you are going to guard Oscar Robertson.' Folks, I can honestly say this is the closest I've ever been to him."

At the end of Hundley's first year as a broadcaster, the Lakers played the Celtics for the NBA championship. Late in one game, the Lakers were trailing, and coach Bill van Breda Kolff had Jerry West on the bench. This did not sit well with Hearn.

drink, Harry replied, 'Son, the last time I turned one down I misunderstood the question.'

Hot Rod gets his rest by sleeping in, and he takes special care to preserve his voice. He has done more than 100 games a year for 27-plus seasons, so obviously he's not partying away this job as he did his NBA playing career. He doesn't own a bar on the road, so he doesn't have to be sociable—and usually isn't. Even Hundley needs time to himself. "I don't mind all the attention at home," he says, "but you do enjoy your moments alone. On the road I can go off by myself and play out my own thoughts."

As a youngster Hundley made himself a great player with hard work. He became a

fullback and sent a man in motion as a guy centered the ball to me," Hundley says. "I dribbled backward and threw a pass. The crowd went crazy."

Near the end of a game in the NCAA Tournament, Hundley went to the line for two free throws. He hooked in the first one with his right hand, and the second one with his left. The crowd went crazy.

In a regular-season tournament Hundley went to the line for two shots that would have given him a tournament scoring record. On both attempts he spun the ball on one finger and punched it toward the hoop. He missed both times. The crowd went crazy anyway. Later someone pointed out that he'd blown a shot at the record. "Yeah, and a year from now someone would have come along and broken my record," Hundley replied. "This way, they'll always remember me."

And so it went. Hundley's reputation grew, and West Virginia sold out games wherever it played. But Hundley never clowning with a contest on the line, and the Mountaineers finished in the top 10 in the national rankings in each of his last two seasons.

Hundley also never clowning as a pro, but he certainly was All-Party off the court. He was through after six seasons, finishing with a modest scoring average of 8.4 points per game. He acknowledges he didn't live up to expectations, including his own, and blames only himself.

"Partying, drinking, smoking, staying out all night, chasing women, raising hell—I did it all," Hundley says. "Hell, my rookie year in Minneapolis [a future Hall-of-Famer] came up and asked me where he could go in town to meet a woman. That was my biggest thrill as a pro."

Hundley had no one to keep him on the straight and narrow. "I was very immature, obviously, but I just thought basketball would last forever," he says. "I had no direction—hadn't since I was a kid. In high school I lived by myself in a room in a hotel owned by a teammate's mother. I'd see sailors coming in at night with women, taking a room for two bucks. I was on my own, did what I wanted to do. That's how I grew up. I didn't know any other way."

He does now, but he's 60 years old. Hot Rod at 60. How quickly the years go by. "Yeah, it bothers me," he says. "Hell, 50 was tough. I'm an old man, and it kind of scares me a little. But I'm not one to dwell on yesterdays. Never have."

No need to. Hundley's present and future are secure. He's still got his faithful companion. He's still riding that ball.

You gotta love it, baby. ■

I used to talk to the ball. I'd say, 'You're going to get me out of here.' I rode that basketball, and I'm still riding it.
—Hot Rod Hundley



"Over the air Chick says, 'I look down, and Jerry West is sitting on the bench,'" Hundley recalls. "Two minutes go by, and Chick says, 'I look down, and Jerry West is still sitting on the bench.' Another minute goes by, and this time Chick turns to me and says, 'Rod, as I look down on the bench, Jerry West is still sitting.'"

"We're broadcasting from up in the balcony. I stand up, look down and say, 'Chick, I just looked down there, and you're right. Jerry West is still sitting.' I wasn't going to touch that line. I thought, 'Chick can get away with coaching, but they're going to fire my ass.'"

Hundley's routine during the season is to go to bed late and wake up late. He has a popular restaurant/bar in Salt Lake City, where he can be found after home games, shmoozing with the customers and relaxing, helped by "six to eight beers at least."

"I'm hyper, and I can't go to sleep," Hundley says. "After running my mouth non-stop for 2½ hours, I've got to unwind." Of his drinking, Hundley is fond of repeating a line he attributes to Harry Caray. "Asked by a guy if he could buy him a

dazzling dribbler and ball-handler, with skills worthy of the Globetrotters. 'I'd go to a handball court at the YMCA because I knew if I went to the playground all I'd do is shoot,'" Hundley says. "I'd put an 'X' on the wall and practice passing behind my back until I could hit the spot nine out of 10 times. I'd dribble, dribble, dribble with both hands until it became easy."

The showmanship began when he was playing for the freshman team at West Virginia. "We had an easy schedule and were beating teams like 100-40, with me scoring 48 or 50," Hundley says, "I got bored with that and started to do things to have fun: going behind my back with everything, doing dribbling routines, clowning around. The fans would go crazy, and that turned me on, so I'd go to bed thinking of new things to do the next game." And "Hot Rod" was born.

He polished his act on the varsity. As he dribbled by the sideline in one game, Hundley grabbed the hat off a state trooper, put it on his own head, and continued upcourt. On another occasion he and his teammates went into a football T-formation after crossing midcourt. "We had a

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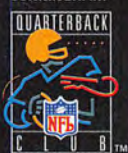
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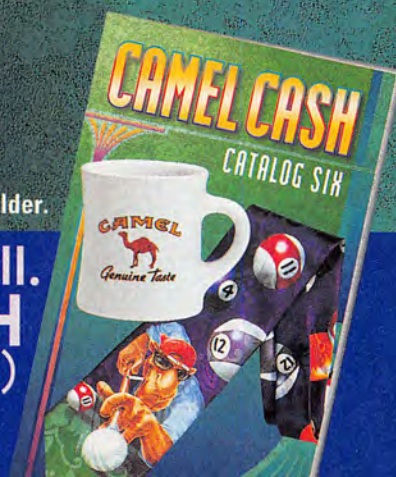
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INSIDE OUT

Has any NBA rookie ever led the league in scoring?

A.C., Garrison, N.D.

Since 1949-50, two rookies have led the NBA in scoring: Wilt Chamberlain, who averaged 37.6 points per game for the Philadelphia Warriors in 1959-60, and Elvin Hayes, who posted a 28.4 ppg mark for the San Diego Rockets in 1968-69. Chamberlain's first-year scoring average never has been surpassed by another NBA player, veteran or rookie; only Wilt himself bettered that 37.6 ppg mark, doing so three times.

In the days before the NBA, rookie Joe Fulks led the Basketball Association of America with 23.2 ppg for the Philadelphia Warriors in 1946-47. That same season, bespectacled tyro George Mikan averaged 16.5 ppg for the Chicago American Gears to win the scoring title in the National Basketball League.

These are the 10 best rookie scorers in NBA history, with their rank in the scoring race that year:

Player, Team	Rookie Season	PPG	League Rank
Wilt Chamberlain, Philadelphia Warriors	1959-60	37.6	1
Walt Bellamy, Chicago Packers	1961-62	31.6	2
Oscar Robertson, Cincinnati Royals	1960-61	30.5	3
Lew Alcindor, Milwaukee Bucks	1969-70	28.8	2
Elvin Hayes, San Diego Rockets	1968-69	28.4	1
Michael Jordan, Chicago Bulls	1984-85	28.2	3
Rick Barry, San Francisco Warriors	1965-66	25.7	4
Terry Dischinger, Chicago Zephyrs	1962-63	25.5	6*
Elgin Baylor, Minneapolis Lakers	1958-59	24.9	4
Geoff Petrie, Portland Trail Blazers	1970-71	24.8	6

*Did not play enough games to qualify for scoring title.

What teams had the best home and road records in a season in major league history? What clubs had the worst?

J.B., Wooster, Ohio

The 1932 New York Yankees hold the modern-era record for the best home winning percentage. The Yanks went 62-15 in

went 13-65 on the road for an abysmal .166 winning percentage.

Has any baseball player hit grand slams in two consecutive games? Also, who holds the record for most runs scored in a game?

T.H., Cincinnati

Fourteen players in major league history have hit grand slams in two consecutive games; Babe Ruth did it twice, in 1927 and 1929. The most recent grand-slam double-dippers are Mike Blowers, who struck in consecutive games for the Seattle Mariners in May 1993, and Dan Gladden, who did so for the Detroit Tigers in August of that same season.

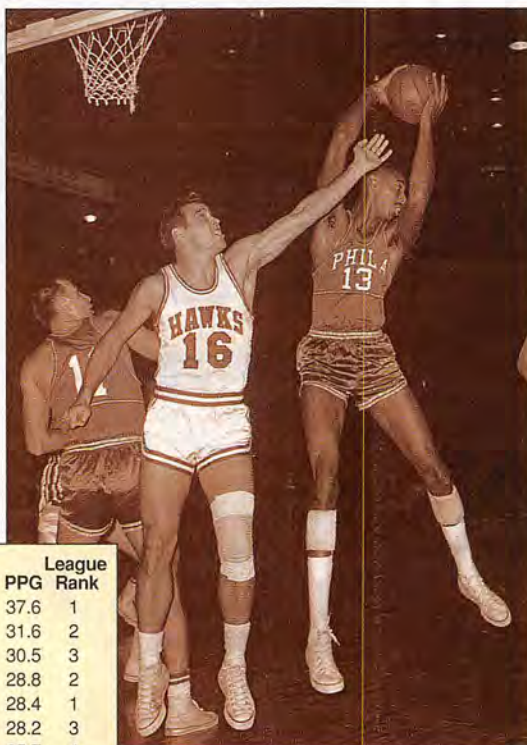
The record for most runs by one player in a game is six, held by 12 men. Only four of those players are from the modern era (post-1900): Mel Ott, who twice scored a six-pack for the New York Giants (August 4, 1934, second game; and April 30, 1944, first game); Johnny Pesky of the Boston Red Sox (May 8, 1946); Frank Torre of the Milwaukee Braves (September 2, 1957, first game); and Spike Owen of the Red Sox (August 21, 1986).

How did the NBA decide on 24 seconds for the shot clock, rather than 25 or 23 or some other number?

L.W., Pasadena, Calif.

After the 1953-54 season, Syracuse Nationals owner Danny Biasone determined that teams had averaged between 75 and 80 shots per game, a clip of one every 18 seconds. He suggested adding six seconds to that span, figuring it would give a team sufficient time to run a peppy but sophisticated offense. The rule put an end to the stall tactics employed by the league's poorer teams to neutralize their opponents' scoring abilities.

At that time the league decided to award two free throws after the sixth team foul of a quarter. This ended the "tactical fouling" strategy by which teams could thwart drives to the basket with relative impunity. With those rules changes the NBA began to realize its fast-paced potential. ■



Wilt hauled in the '59-60 scoring title with a record rookie average.

Yankee Stadium, an .805 success rate. The 1961 New York Yankees won the most games at home in major league history; they were 65-16 in Yankee Stadium, for an .802 mark.

On the other side of the coin, the St. Louis Browns of 1939 were a pathetic 18-59 (.234) in the unfriendly confines of Sportsman's Park, the fewest home victories and worst home percentage ever. The Browns' record-setting performance may help explain—or was it the result of?—their paltry home attendance that year: 109,159, or 1,418 a game.

The 1906 Chicago Cubs' road winning percentage of .800 (60-15) is the best in big-league history, and their record also represents the most road victories by a team in a season. The 1935 Boston Braves hold the dubious distinction of being the worst road team since 1900. The Braves

The Dallas Cowboys won the Super Bowl after the 1992 season but did not send a single player from their defense to the Pro Bowl that year. When was the last time a Super Bowl winner didn't have a single offensive player in the Pro Bowl?

S.M., Irving, Texas

You have to go all the way back to the first Pro Bowl, after the 1970 season, to find a Super Bowl winner that failed to land an offensive player in the AFC-NFC all-star game. Not a single offensive player from the Baltimore Colts team that defeated Dallas 16-13 in Super Bowl V made the AFC squad. Defensive end Bubba Smith, linebacker Mike Curtis, and defensive back Jerry Logan represented the Super Bowl winners in the inaugural Pro Bowl.

To get the behind-the-scenes scoops that the record books don't always cover, send your questions to Inside Out, 990 Grove Street, Evanston, IL 60201.

Thurman Thomas

Just Be Careful When You Mention the Helmet

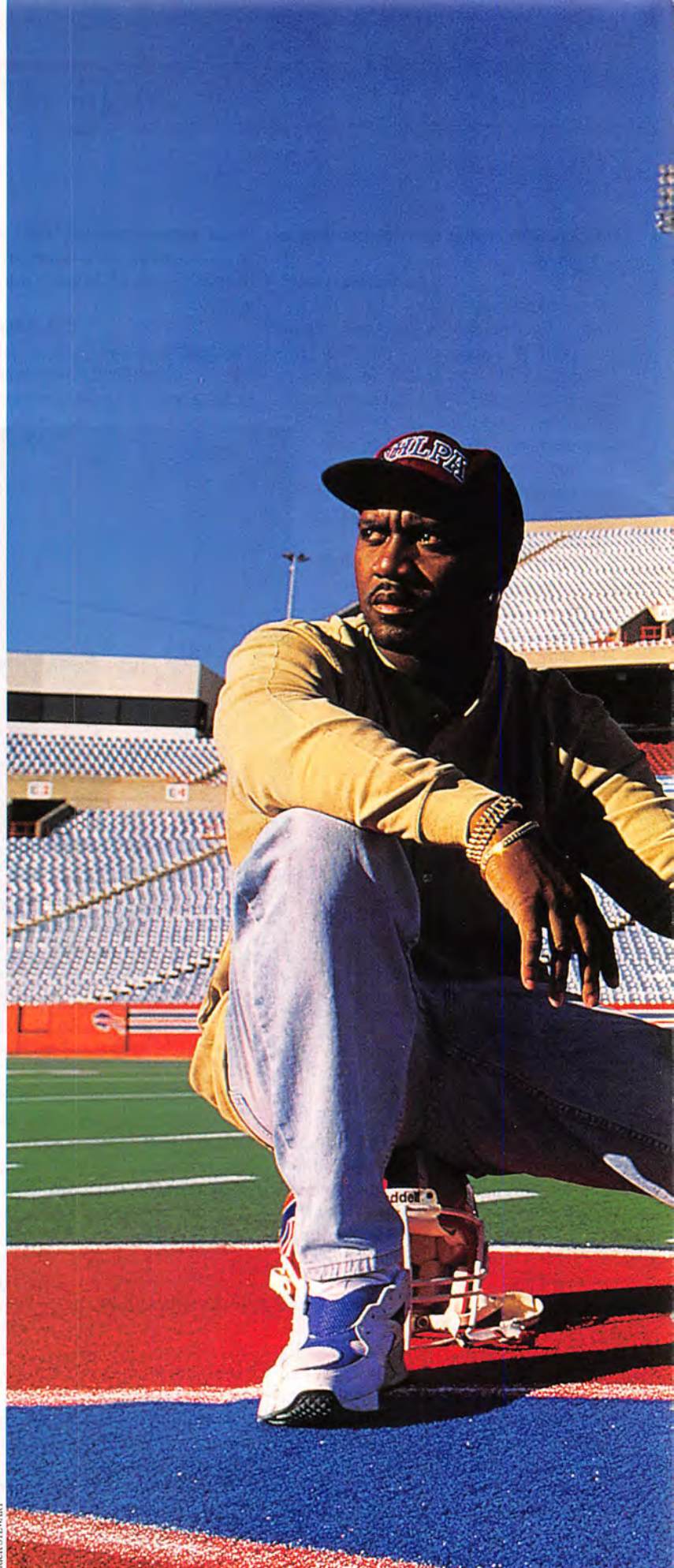
Buffalo's star running back opens up about his image among the fans, his place in NFL history, and the Bills' Super Bowl flops

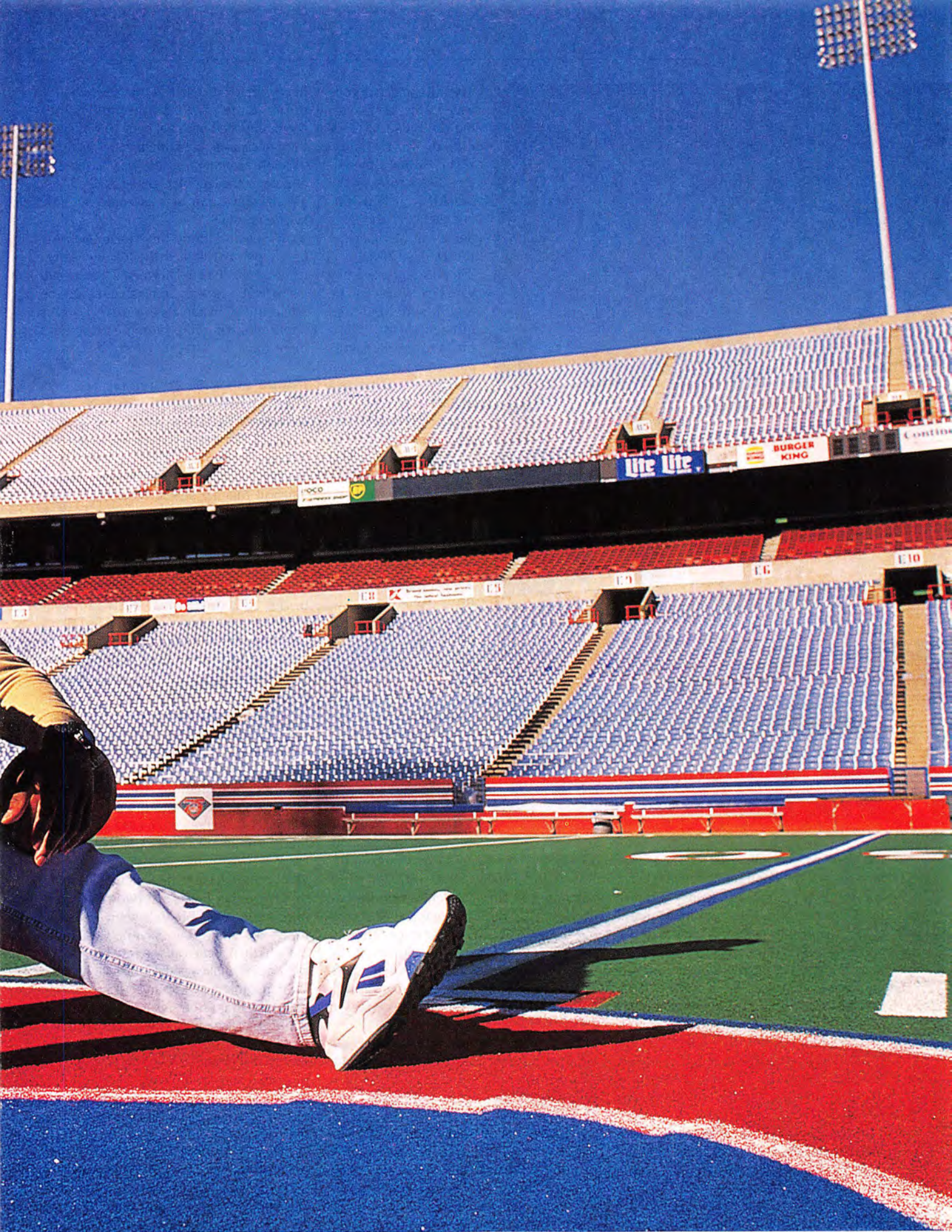
By JEFF RYAN

SO MUCH FOR THE BEST-LAID SCHEMES of Mickey Mouse and men. Last January, for the fourth time, the people from Disney approached Buffalo Bills running back Thurman Thomas to work out the details for a post-Super Bowl vacation announcement: a sure-to-be exuberant "I'm going to Disney World!" And for the fourth time, the All-Pro headed not to Orlando after the big game but back to frigid Buffalo on a very quiet plane ride.

"Four times," Thomas marvels. "They need to stop asking me and start asking somebody else."

Or maybe Thomas just needs to get the ball over







"People realize what I've done over a seven-year career: the yardage, the records. It speaks for itself."

STEVE WOLTMANN

the goal line, the Bills over the hump, the monkey and the critics off the team's back, and the Vince Lombardi Trophy into the hands of the NFL's eternal bridesmaid owner, Ralph Wilson. Never mind that No. 34 could yell, "I'm going to the Hall of Fame!" after every game he plays and get no argument. Or that he is only one man on a team that has failed to deliver in four straight Super Bowls. Unfairly or not, Thomas has become the symbol of the Bills' identity crisis: The regular-season and playoff powerhouse turns into a punch-drunk sparring partner come Super Sunday.

In Super Bowl XXV against the New York Giants, Thomas rushed for 135 yards, caught five passes for 55 yards, and surely would have been the game's MVP if Scott Norwood's 47-yard field goal attempt in the final seconds had sailed through the

13 win over the Kansas City Chiefs in the AFC Championship Game with 186 yards rushing and three touchdowns; he has averaged 123 yards rushing and 42 receiving in his four AFC title games. Thomas has led the AFC in rushing three of the past four seasons and has topped the NFL in combined rushing and receiving yardage four times. He was the league's MVP in 1991 and has been to four Pro Bowls.

Thomas runs the ball with abandon, and he often has run his mouth the same way. There was a time when an interview with him was no more than a forum for his gripes of wrath: The press wasn't giving him recognition, the fans didn't appreciate him, and on and on. As Thomas sits down to talk on a brisk day at Buffalo's Rich Stadium, however, his mood is relaxed. Perhaps he is conserving his emotional energy. More likely, he is learning to enjoy

uprights and not gone wide to the right, sending the Bills to a 20-19 defeat. In the next three Super Bowls—the 37-24 loss to the Washington Redskins and the 52-17 and 30-13 defeats at the hands of the Dallas Cowboys—Thomas totaled just 69 yards on 37 carries. He lost his helmet and missed the first few plays of the Redskins game, an incident that has come to serve as a metaphor for the Bills, who lose their heads whenever they line up against the NFC's best with the world watching. Even more frustrating was Thomas' fumble last January in the opening minute of the third quarter against Dallas, with the Bills ahead. The Cowboys' James Washington picked up the loose ball and returned it 46 yards for the tying touchdown. The Bills were out of the game from that point on.

Considering Thomas' ability to lift his game in other big situations, the Stupor Sunday phenomenon is curious. He keyed last season's 30-

his current status. In this, the seventh year of his career, the 28-year-old Thomas seems satisfied with his body of work, and he is energized, not burdened, by thoughts of another championship chase. On this afternoon, the laughter comes easily. There are as many howls as scowls, even a little self-deprecation.

However, mention the lost helmet, the lost Super Bowls, and the lost sleep that followed them, and Thurman Thomas still can bristle. As long as he thinks that too much of the blame rests squarely on his shoulders, the chip is going to remain there, too.

INSIDE SPORTS: Are you the best running back in the NFL?

THURMAN THOMAS: No. [A long laugh] I can't say I'm the best because when you look at the top three guys—myself, Barry Sanders, and Emmitt Smith—we all have different running styles. What really separates us is that I'm more involved in the passing game than they are. When it comes to blocking, running the football, and catching it, I think I'm the best all-around back. Every year I'm in the top five in the NFL in rushing, but I probably would be a lot higher if our offense didn't throw the ball as much as we do.

IS: What would you rather do: break a run from scrimmage for 80 yards, or utilize a great move to get open and then score on an 80-yard pass play?

TT: I've played running back all my life, so that's what I think of myself as first. I'd definitely take the run.

IS: The consensus is that Smith and Sanders are the best running backs, and you're third. You've complained in the past that you're not appreciated. Is that still the case?

TT: It comes down to the fact that Emmitt's won two Super Bowls and Barry has a running style that nobody's seen in a long time—not since Gale Sayers. He cuts to the left, then comes all the way back to the right, spins, makes people miss.

I'm not that type of runner. If I see a hole I'm going to go right for it, whereas Barry might first dance around a little bit. But I think many people realize what I've done over a seven-year career: the yardage, the records. It speaks for itself.

IS: Would you have bigger numbers if you played in a dome like Sanders and not in the elements in Buffalo?

TT: Yeah. That's why I try to run real hard early in the year and get my yardage up. Once it gets to late November and December you get the rain and the ice and snow, and it's hard to get footing. But I still

have been productive in this type of weather. Other teams wear turtlenecks when they play us in January, and they feel uncomfortable. I go sleeveless. We practice in that cold, we drive to work in it, we drive home in it. That makes it tough on the opponent.

IS: Rank the top five running backs.

TT: Right now, I would put Barry first, Emmitt second, myself third, Jerome Bettis fourth, and fifth would be a guy I watched when he was in college, Marshall Faulk. He's impressed me a lot.

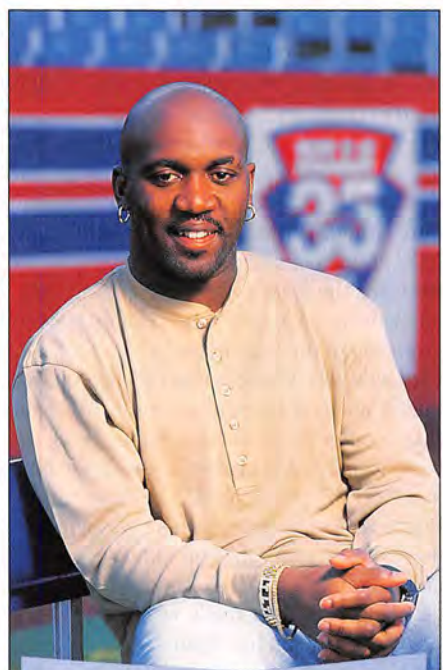
IS: When did you learn to accept people saying you weren't the best? That used to gnaw at you.

TT: It's bothered me through the years, but now I know it's something I can't control. If I say, "You all better start giving me the respect I deserve," I hear, "Oh, he's arrogant and cocky; he's patting himself on the back." My main concern is what I do for the Buffalo Bills and what they expect of me, not what some writer writes in Detroit or Dallas or L.A.

The last year or two, I've calmed down my aggravation. I decided it's not worth it, because it seemed like no matter what I did on the football field, people still had something negative to say about me.

IS: Why is that?

TT: The media think they're the only ones



BUCK STEWART

"I'm outspoken, but I couldn't care less who does or doesn't like me."



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"I'm a man. I admitted my fumble was a turning point in the Super Bowl."

who can speak their minds. I'm a professional athlete, and I'm making a lot of money, so the media think I'm supposed to just come out and play ball and not say anything. I've always been outspoken, and I've always said what I thought was right. I'm just speaking my mind, but I think the media feel I'm trying to do their job when I give an opinion. They don't like it.

I'm sure being outspoken has hurt my popularity with some of the fans, too. Some fans love you no matter what, but you're going to have that percentage that says, "He could have run to the endzone a little faster and spiked the ball a little harder." But to be honest, I couldn't care less who does or doesn't like me.

IS: One of the criticisms of you is that you have lost some of your explosiveness.

TT: I've read that, and I don't know what the hell they're talking about. I've never been a 4.2 or 4.3 guy in the 40. That's Barry Sanders or Marshall Faulk. I'm in the 4.4, 4.5 range. My quickness is still there—that ability to make a cut—but I was never a fast person. [Laughing] In order for me to run for a 99-yard touchdown, all the defenders would have to fall down.

IS: With the exception of your first appear-

ance, against the Giants, your performances in the Super Bowl have not been on the same level as your efforts in playoff games. Why?

TT: They *haven't* been as good, and I have no reason why. You go out and try to play as hard as you possibly can, but...

I don't think you can point at one individual. This is a team game. If I was to come out and say this guy should have done this and that guy should have done that, the critics would say I shouldn't be thinking only of myself in a team game. But those same critics want to point out one individual to blame. To me, that's not right.

IS: Naturally, it takes a great effort just to make it to the Super Bowl, but you can tell yourself that only so many times. Which loss hurts you the most?

TT: The first one hurts the most because it was so close. We had a great opportunity to beat the Giants. The Redskins just beat our asses for the whole four quarters. The first time against the Cowboys, we had nine turnovers. Then last year I fumbled, and it swung the momentum.

IS: After James Washington returned that fumble for the tying touchdown, you came back to the bench and buried your head in

your hands, and the life seemed to go right out of the Bills. Was that a bad message to send to the team?

TT: I've been watching sports all my life, and I've seen thousands of athletes do the same thing. Did doing it hurt my team? Sure, it did. But could we have still come back at that point and won? Sure.

IS: Does the team find itself thinking, "Oh, no, here we go again," when things start to go wrong in the Super Bowl?

TT: Definitely. Coming into this season, we talked about it in training camp. We said that in order for us to win a Super Bowl, we have to play almost mistake-free for four quarters. If you look at the four Super Bowls we lost, whenever there was a breakdown, there was a big breakdown. No ifs, ands, or buts about it—when things started going bad, they *really* went bad. That's the way this team has been.

IS: How much are you personally to blame for the Super Bowl failures, and what portion of the criticism is unfair?

TT: People are always going to point the finger in somebody's direction. Go back to the first Super Bowl. "If Scott Norwood had made the field goal..." He didn't, so everybody pointed the finger at him. But look at

the third quarter of that game. The Giants came out and, shit, they held the ball for 10 minutes. You can blame our defense as easily as you can blame the kicker.

Besides my fumble in the third quarter, the biggest play of the game against the Cowboys last year was before halftime. We were on their 10-yard line and driving. If we had scored a touchdown we would've been up 17-6, and after my fumble, the Cowboys still would have been behind 17-13. But we had to settle for the field goal.

Because I'm a man, I spoke up after the game and said my fumble was a turning point. If I had run away from that, I probably would have gotten a lot more fingers pointed at me. But I still get plenty pointed at me anyway. I just have to go out and perform and not let it bother me.

IS: Why can't the AFC win a Super Bowl?

TT: I don't think there is an explanation. But the way sports is now, with the media, there's more attention than ever on the Super Bowl. The NFC has won 10 in a row, but in the '70s the AFC was kicking ass—there just wasn't as much media around to ask why the NFC wasn't winning.

IS: "Anybody but Buffalo" has become a popular sentiment among AFC fans during the postseason. How do you feel about that?

TT: Basically, I don't care what people outside of

Buffalo think. If your team is not good enough to beat us, then we're going to go back again. Nobody in the AFC has stopped us, and we're going to keep going back, whether we lose five or six in a row.

IS: How difficult is it to stay motivated knowing there's a grueling 16-game schedule and two or three playoff games between you and another Super Bowl?

TT: We know every team we play is shooting for us, and that's great motivation. To get to another Super Bowl, we know we have to play very well. We can't go out there and think because we've been to four straight everybody in our conference is going to lay down for us. Just wanting to keep winning is motivation. Losing is something I've never been associated with in my career. I haven't been on the 4-12 or 3-13 teams. I always kid Bruce Smith about

when he and those guys were going 2-14.

IS: Jim Kelly has a lot of mileage on him, and the defense isn't getting any younger. How much longer can the Bills be a force?

TT: I don't know. It depends on the type of players we draft and the free agents we get. The keys to this team have been to avoid many serious injuries through the years and to do a great job of keeping the core players here, even with the salary cap and free agency. Cornelius Bennett, Darryl Talley, Jim Kelly, Andre Reed—we've kept the guys who make the big plays.

IS: Is the helmet incident going to haunt you until you win the Super Bowl?

TT: I don't think people are ever going to forget about it because the media write about it every damn time they mention Thurman Thomas. Most of the people who do write it have never sat down in a one-on-one interview with me and found out what happened.

IS: What did happen?



"Nobody in the AFC has stopped us. We'll keep going back whether we lose five or six in a row."

TT: I put my helmet on the end of the bench closest to where we'd be after the kickoff. It got moved. Everybody said I wasn't concentrating on the game, but I wouldn't make a crazy mistake like that if it wasn't moved. If we won the game, it never would have been mentioned, but that type of shit sells newspapers. I look at it this way: Things like that happening, Jim Marshall running the wrong way, are the reason they have "Football Follies" tapes.

IS: Do you joke about it now?

TT: I do with my teammates. Bruce and Darryl like to hide my helmet.

IS: If you finally win a world championship, will you be more euphoric or relieved?

TT: [Smiling] It would be like, "Phew! If you want to break up the team now, go ahead. You can."

IS: What was the most sympathetic reac-

tion you got from a Bills fan in the offseason? What was the harshest?

TT: The best reaction was a lot of people who said, "You lost, but you're still an exceptional football player, and if you didn't have that great game against Kansas City the team wouldn't have even been in the Super Bowl." The worst? I haven't really had anybody come up to me personally and say anything bad. I don't think they have the guts to, I really don't. I'm like Charles Barkley. When I'm on the field, you can say anything you want. Once I get out in public, you have no right to taunt me.

People always tell athletes, "If you hit me, I'll sue." Well, if a guy's in my face and I push him or whatever, I have a lot of close friends, and they'll back me up in court. If somebody comes up to me and starts something, I'm not going to sit there and take it. I've always been like that, and I'll continue to be like that.

IS: You and every other running back

arriving in Buffalo think you never could become as beloved as O.J. Simpson. Now O.J.'s reputation probably has been damaged irreparably. Has the irony of that dawned on you? Is there a chance that you can be more popular than him by the time your career is over?

TT: I don't think that ever will happen. I don't think I could replace O.J. in this town even if I won

eight rushing titles. Everybody loved him, and they still do, despite what's going on right now. I met him in 1989, and we used to go out on the town in Buffalo. The people we met always thought he was the greatest.

IS: When a fan who closely followed your career makes the trip from Buffalo to Canton, Ohio, to look at your bust in the Hall of Fame one day, what is he going to tell his grandson when they're standing there and pointing to it?

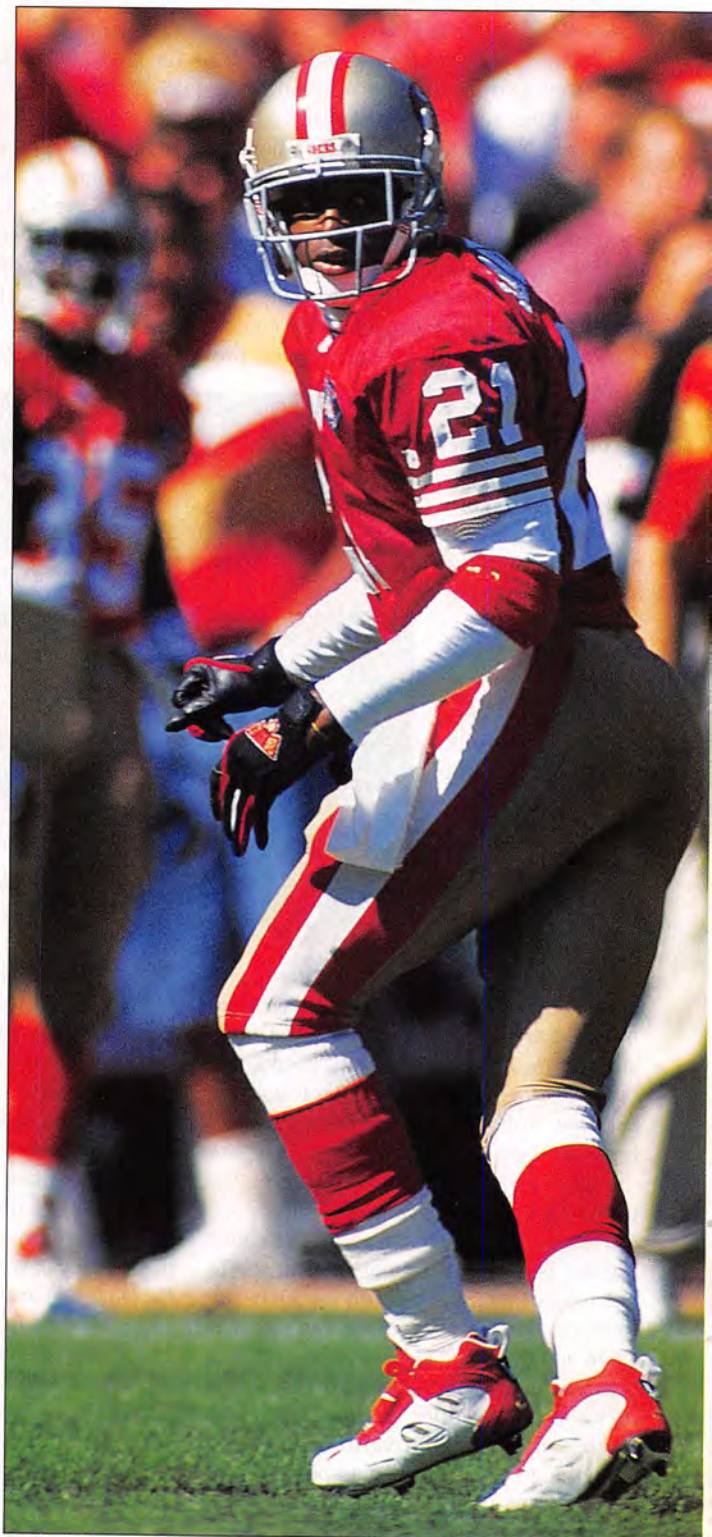
TT: "That guy there was a hell of a football player. I loved the way he ran the ball. I loved the way he caught the ball. I loved the way he did everything. But the media wrote a lot of bullshit about him because they never really knew the guy." [Pauses, then laughs] He shouldn't say "bullshit" to his grandson, though. ■

Another Feather in Their Cap



By ART SPANDER

The 49ers snag stars such as Deion Sanders with deft money moves and a winning reputation among players



WE SHALL CALL THE INCIDENT—BEGGING your indulgence, and alluding to the brave new financial world of the NFL—the “cap de grâce.” There was Deion Sanders, “Prime Time” himself, the player the San Francisco 49ers supposedly couldn’t afford because of the salary limitation imposed in the terms of the basic agreement between NFL players and owners, intercepting a pass thrown by Jim Everett of the New Orleans Saints and running, strutting, and smiling 74 yards for a touchdown. Then, over the loudspeaker system at Candlestick Park on this September afternoon, came the most preposterous of songs and sounds:

“M-I-C...K-E-Y...”

What? Did the senses deceive? Was that merely the imagination playing off the shouts of the home crowd? Not at all.

“...M-O-U-S-E. Mickey Mouse, Mickey Mouse...”

And now some 63,000 people were singing along while at the north end of the stadium, teammates swept over Deion in waves of adulation.

*“Who’s the leader of the club that’s made for you and me?
M-I-C...K-E-Y...M-O-U-S-E.”*

Someone from the 49ers, that most respectable of organizations—president Carmen Policy, quite probably—had chosen the moment to take off the gloves and take on the critics. How out of character. How satisfying.

A few days earlier, the Niners, who had been baffling the rest of the league with their economic wizardry through the spring and summer, had topped even themselves by signing Sanders. Perhaps speaking for his brethren, Saints owner

"This is a farce," trumpeted Benson, who presumably should know one when he sees one, having boogied along the sidelines in the Superdome. "The New Orleans Saints live by the book, and everyone else should live by the book, including the San Francisco 49ers. What kind of a Mickey Mouse organization are we running out there?"

It's unclear to whom Benson was referring with that "we." Most took it to be the Niners, but maybe he meant the Saints. Or even the NFL. Suffice it to say, San Francisco management took the remark personally, and as an insult. The implication was that the lying, cheating 49ers somehow had managed to lift a salary cap already as heavy as a manhole cover.

Adding to Benson's anger was his belief that the 49ers were trying to hide an option clause in the one-year deal they signed with Sanders, although the clause, whether hidden or not, was included in the contract only to keep Deion from becoming a restricted free agent next summer. The likelihood that San Francisco would, or could, exercise the option is nil.

And so, on the fourth weekend of the 1994 season, after Sanders' dash in the final minutes locked up the 24-13 win over New Orleans, the theme from "The Mickey Mouse Club" reverberated through the Stick, where the Saints and Benson had been stuck.

Seven months earlier, the 49ers looked like the team that would be stuck. They had the NFL's highest payroll in 1993, and '94 would bring the cap crashing down on their heads and, most experts presumed, their hopes. Through the years Niners owner Eddie DeBartolo had spent his way to success, building depth on an already talented team. He could pick up a Fred Dean or a Matt Millen to bolster the defense, keep a Steve Young or a Steve Bono as a backup quarterback.

But now what? Everyone was equal—or so it seemed. However, everyone didn't have Carmen Policy on their side.

Policy grew up in Youngstown, Ohio, not so much on the other side of the tracks as on the other side of the Mahoning River, which divides the town. His father labored in the mills. As a boy Carmen worked in an ice cream shop. He played a bit of football for Ursuline High, across the bridge from the more prosperous Catholic prep school, Cardinal Mooney—DeBartolo's alma mater.

Policy went to Youngstown State and Georgetown law school and became a lawyer. DeBartolo graduated from Notre Dame and went to work in the family real estate business. One of Policy's clients

sued the billion-dollar DeBartolo Corp. Eddie called the lawyer. A friendship grew, then a working relationship, and soon Policy, previously an unknown in NFL circles, was in charge of the 49ers.

"My whole life has been based on strategy," Policy says, "An attorney has to analyze the situation, plan a trial, anticipate the unexpected, find a way to turn adversity into profit, or into good fortune. That's very much like dealing with players and the salary cap."

The 49ers entered the 1993 season with a \$46 million payroll—\$11.4 million more than would be allowed under the 1994 cap. A franchise that had won 10 games or more for 11 consecutive seasons faced the very real prospect of having to dismantle its roster. The future hardly was enticing. How would Policy turn this adversity into profit? Easy: Reel in the future to the present, and make the '93 payroll \$56 million.

In November 1993 Policy sat in DeBartolo's office, with the door closed—a rare circumstance—and explained how he could keep the team intact. All he would need was \$10 million of DeBartolo's money. Quickly.

The Niners would front-load the salaries of their key players—in other words, pay them 1994 and '95 money in 1993 by amending contracts already signed. If tackles Harris Barton and Steve Wallace, keys to the offensive line, were worth \$1 million, then give them \$2 million for 1993 and less for '94, because the money in '93 wouldn't count against the cap. Thus the NFL's best offense—Young and Jerry Rice, John Taylor and Brent Jones and Ricky Watters, Wallace and Barton and Jesse Sapolu—would, for all intents and purposes, remain the best offense.

There were exceptions. Fullback Tom Rathman, who some considered the team's spiritual leader, faced a reduced salary and a reduced role, and so he did not return. But most of the other offensive stars did.

However, Steve Young-to-Jerry Rice doesn't mean a hill of beans when the other team has the ball. Big games are won on defense, or in the 49ers' case lately, lost there. Memories of the 1993 NFC Championship Game at Dallas remained hauntingly clear in the minds of Niners brass. The Cowboys gained 275 yards against San Francisco—in the first half. Defense was where the real work lay.

According to disclosures at the NFL meetings last March in Florida, the 49ers had a mere \$432 remaining before they hit the cap, and 19 unsigned players from '93. Moreover, the draft was approaching, meaning even more players to be signed. The other owners had the 49ers right where they wanted them—and



FOCUS ON SPORTS INC.



AL MESSERSCHMIDT (2)

The moves of DeBartolo and Policy hardly had Saints owner Benson dancing on the Superdome sideline.

Tom Benson—a guy who had offered Sanders far more money and more security than the 49ers had—accused San Francisco of deception.

10 Players Whose Careers Were Rudely Interrupted by the Salary Cap

Phil Simms. Coming off arthroscopic surgery on his throwing shoulder at age 38, Simms was scheduled to make \$2.5 million with the New York Giants in what everyone believed would be the final season of his career. But on June 15 the Giants released him. "We felt the risk was too great for the uncertainty," said GM George Young. "We didn't know about his arm, and under the system now in place, every player has an effect on the other players."

Art Monk. The NFL's all-time receptions leader made \$1.1 million in 1993 with the Washington Redskins. The Skins offered Monk \$600,000 to stay under new coach Norv Turner. Monk instead signed with the New York Jets for \$575,000 plus incentives—which proves neither money nor loyalty was as important as pride.

Richard Dent. The Chicago Bears' all-time leader in sacks had signed a two-year deal with the Bears that promised \$1.2 million in 1993 and 1994, plus free agency after 1993 if he met incentives. Dent met the criteria and went shopping. The Bears offered \$2.3 million for 1994; Dent declined. The Bears took the offer off the table after they drafted John Thierry. Dent signed with the San Francisco 49ers for two years and \$3 million—\$500,000 to sign and a base of \$750,000 in 1994, with no guarantee for the \$1.75 million in '95.

Tommy Maddox. The heir apparent to John Elway wouldn't agree to a pay cut from \$850,000 to \$200,000 after Denver signed journeyman Hugh Millen for the minimum \$162,000. The Los Angeles Rams gave the Broncos a fourth-round draft choice for Maddox and assumed the

final two years of his four-year, \$4.4 million contract—only to reduce the contract to a one-year deal worth approximately \$500,000. Maddox will become a restricted free agent after the season, and at age 23 he'll already have a healthy idea of life in the new NFL.

Mike Johnson. The underrated linebacker signed a \$2.169 million deal with the Cleveland Browns for 1993, and the Browns made him feel extra warm by labeling him a "transition player," meaning Cleveland would retain right of first refusal. Then the team removed the transition tag and told Johnson it was going "in another direction." Johnson signed with the Detroit Lions for \$900,000.

Clay Matthews. Nobody doubted that the NFL's oldest linebacker still could play despite his age, but the Browns offered the 38-year-old Matthews \$750,000, about half of his 1993 salary of \$1.55 million. Matthews took too long to decide and wound up with the Atlanta Falcons for \$825,000. "It's awful tough to leave," Matthews said. "The fans have always been great. I loved playing there." Browns owner Art Modell considered retiring Matthews' number.

Broderick Thompson. The Philadelphia Eagles offensive tackle saw \$200,000 lopped off his \$840,000 salary before the season opener; he was one of six Philly veterans whose salaries were cut at the last minute. (The players filed a grievance with the league; Thompson's pay was restored, and the rest recovered half the money.) Some Eagles proposed across-the-board 2% or 3% reductions rather than 10% to 30% chunks from a few players. Right. "Why should anyone have to come

to the players to pay other players?" asked quarterback Randall Cunningham, scuttling the notion of intramural charity.

Rickey Jackson. The longtime Saint made \$1.3 million in 1993, his 13th season with New Orleans. The Saints offered \$500,000 for '94; Jackson wanted \$700,000. "I would like to go out with the team I came in with," the 36-year-old linebacker said. The Saints added \$800,000 in incentives Jackson said would have forced him "to have been a combination of Derrick Thomas, Lawrence Taylor, and myself to earn." The offer came off the table after training camp started, and Jackson signed with San Francisco for the minimum salary of \$162,000 plus incentive clauses that will kick in if the 49ers reach the Super Bowl.

Steve Bono. His 1994 contract called for a \$1.55 million salary, so not only could the 49ers not afford to keep their backup quarterback, but other teams couldn't afford to trade for him until he agreed to re-sign at a lower rate. Bono rejected San Francisco's offer of \$750,000 and ended up with a deal from the Chiefs for slightly more. The Chiefs gave the 49ers a fourth-round pick that could become a No. 3 based on playing time.

Reggie Langhorne. In 1993 the Indianapolis Colts receiver caught 85 passes for 1,083 yards, both career highs for a player in his prime at age 30. But new Colts boss Bill Tobin thought Langhorne's \$1.1 million salary and three touchdown catches didn't add up. Indy failed to make an offer, and other teams showed little interest. Langhorne apparently has joined a select group of athletes whose best season was their last.—Don Pierson

in Orlando, no less, home of Disney World and Mickey Mouse's East Coast residence. A little traveling music please, and don't forget the mouse ears.

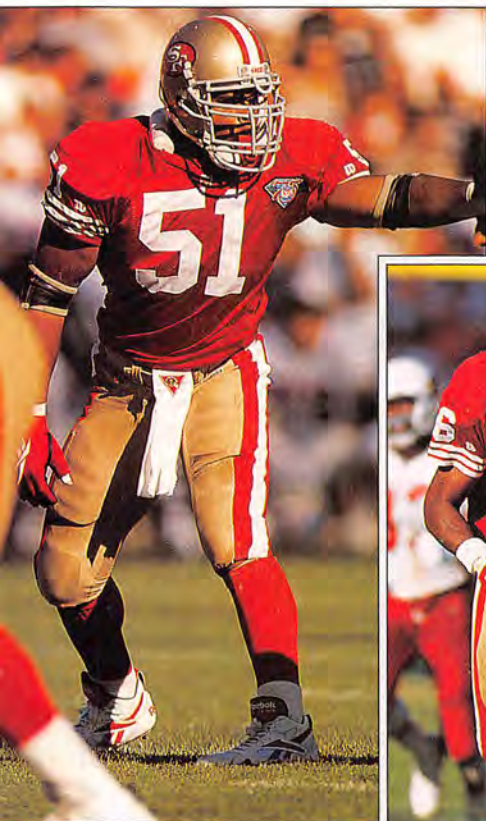
The Niners had other ideas. "Eddie gave us a mandate to keep the 49ers up there," Policy says. "We had it tougher than other teams. We were always on the cutting edge, where other people would have plenty of room under the cap and didn't have to make cuts. We were always looking at each other and saying 'What if...?' or 'How can we...?' Necessity was the mother of improvisation. We had a commitment not to let this team turn into a mediocre bunch of athletes."

As in physics, so in football: For every action there is a reaction. The Niners' actions were to sign defensive free agents and draft picks. The reactions were to release veterans who didn't fit into the equation. Other teams were responding in the same fashion, but the 49ers had an advantage: their reputation.

Professional football players are much like the rest of us, just stronger and faster. They want to be wanted. They like a smile, a kind word, a lot of money. Since "Eddie D," as the owner is known, purchased the 49ers in 1977, he has treated his players—indeed, the whole organization—like an extended family. To DeBartolo, his employ-

ees are not chattel. They are pals.

When the 49ers won their fourth Super Bowl, players and family received a week-long, all-expenses-paid trip to Hawaii. There are jumbo jets for charters, and Christmas gifts all around. When a player's wife has a baby, DeBartolo sends flowers. When a guy joins the 49ers from another team, DeBartolo sends a basket of fruit. "In all my years with the Bills," says former nose tackle Fred Smerlas, who joined San Francisco toward the end of his career after a decade with Buffalo, "I never even got a banana." At the press conference to announce that Joe Montana was going to the Kansas City Chiefs, Eddie D was at



Joe's side, sniffing like a father whose son was leaving home, maybe for good.

"Eddie's owned the team 18 years," Policy says. "He's been fined for giving bonuses. He's been ridiculed by everyone—except the players. We're harvesting the crops he has sown. All of a sudden players who have heard about the 49ers were willing to join us and make financial sacrifices to do so."



All for one: Norton [51] and McDonald agreed to rework their deals to fit Sanders under the cap.

Enter, please, from stage right, Deion. The salary cap was designed to prevent free-spending owners such as DeBartolo from collecting all-star free agents, but it didn't take into account the 49ers' ability to trade on the good will they generated through their success in the '80s.

Set free by the premature end of the baseball sea-

son, Sanders juked and jived from football telecast to football telecast in late August, peddling his services and taking offers. He seemed to show up on every channel except the Home Shopping Network—which, considering his intent, was a considerable oversight. Deion insisted he wanted to play for the 49ers, but there was no chance of that. The 49ers themselves made that perfectly clear.

In the second week of the season Policy said the 49ers no longer were in the bidding. Sanders wanted millions; they were a mere \$21,000 below the cap. He wanted a multiyear contract; they couldn't afford him for more than a year, if at all.

But things change. Last spring, after lopping off players, San Francisco signed All-Pro linebacker Ken Norton, a Dallas free agent, to a five-year, \$8 million contract, and linebacker Gary Plummer, a San Diego Chargers free agent, to a \$1 million-plus deal. When Sanders became available, Policy went to Norton, Plummer, and strong safety Tim McDonald and asked them to restructure their contracts to convert some of their money from straight salary into signing bonuses, which are prorated.

"I had them all do it in one day, before anybody else could see what was happening," Policy says, "because the league posts

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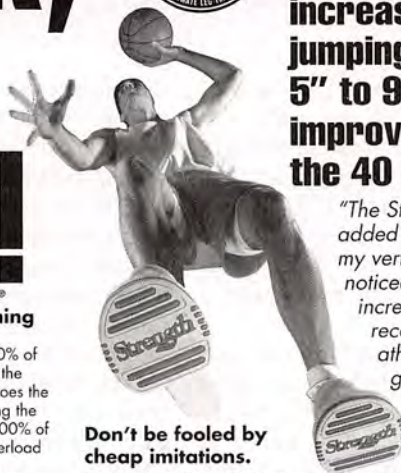
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Five Teams Ambushed by the Salary Cap

Indianapolis Colts. The Colts had four victories in 1993 and a payroll hovering around \$41 million, so new director of operations Bill Tobin released nine players who represented nearly \$8 million in payroll, including Jessie Hester, Duane Bickett, Reggie Langhorne, and Clarence Verdin, a million-dollar kick returner. Replacing quarterback Jeff George with Jim Harbaugh had nothing to do with the cap but also saved money. Tobin spent about as much to sign free-agent linebacker Tony Bennett as he saved in releasing Bickett. Top draft choices Marshall Faulk and Trev Alberts got rich contracts, but Tobin signed veteran defensive ends Al Noga and Freddie Joe Nunn, who each made more than \$1 million last year, to minimum contracts of \$162,000 apiece. Tobin knows he's just renting his veterans. "The idea is for them to play well this year," he says, "and next year 30 teams will be after them."

Washington Redskins. What would GM Charley Casserly, whose team was well over the cap, do with veteran stars Mark Rypien (31 years old, \$3 million), Art Monk (36, \$1.1 million), and Charles Mann (33, \$1.6 million)? Casserly ended up replacing them with 27-year-old quarterback John Friesz (Chargers), 33-year-old wideout Henry Ellard (Rams), and 32-year-old defensive end Leonard Marshall (Jets). Casserly also added expensive line-

backer Ken Harvey from the Cardinals (four years, \$11 million). The Redskins asked several veterans to take pay cuts to make room for No. 1 draft choice QB Heath Shuler. When the dust settled, Washington was under the salary cap but was rebuilding with a team even older than the previous season.

Denver Broncos. The Broncos loaded up with offensive talent to help John Elway in the last years of his prime, adding receivers Anthony Miller (Chargers) and Mike Pritchard (Falcons), and 1,000-yard running back Leonard Russell (Patriots). To pay for all the luxuries, the Broncos decided to rely on coach Wade Phillips' magic with defense. They added cornerbacks Ray Crockett from Detroit and Ben Smith from Philadelphia but insulted nose tackle Greg Kragen, linebacker Karl Mecklenburg, and safety Dennis Smith with low-ball offers that the players refused. When the Broncos discovered they couldn't outscore teams at will, they lured Mecklenburg and Smith back with cash and a cry for help.

Houston Oilers. The Oilers decided they couldn't afford two quarterbacks, Warren Moon and Cody Carlson, at a combined \$6.25 million a season. Houston chose to keep Carlson, much to the delight of the Minnesota Vikings, who happened to be looking for an established quarterback.

The Vikings yielded just a fourth-round draft pick and a conditional third-round selection for Moon. The Oilers also lost defensive ends Sean Jones (Packers) and William Fuller (Eagles), and linebacker Wilber Marshall (Cardinals), and attracted precious little in return. "A lot of teams in this league are on the information superhighway, but the Oilers have always chosen to be on the feeder road," Jones says. "You can't get where you want to go that way."

Buffalo Bills. Unable to re-sign Pro Bowl offensive tackle Howard (House) Ballard and Pro Bowl cornerback Nate Odomes, the Bills reluctantly watched both go to Seattle and tried to replace them with homegrown talent rather than big-name free agents they couldn't afford anyway. "To re-sign Ballard and Odomes might have cost us as many as eight players who we think are pretty good," said general manager John Butler. Buffalo traded cornerback James Williams (Cardinals), released guard Jim Ritcher and cornerback Kirby Jackson, and did not re-sign tight end Keith McKeller and safety Mark Kelso. The Bills were prepared to take their chances with young, emerging players—but were not prepared for the league's apparent decision in October to eliminate first- and second-round compensatory draft picks for teams that showed a net loss in free agency. —D.P.

updates each day on where you are with the salary cap." Then he took the new money and signed the new cornerback, Sanders, for a \$1.134 million base, plus \$500,000 if the 49ers win the NFC championship and an additional \$250,000 if they win the Super Bowl. "The Lord," said Sanders upon introduction, "works in mysterious ways."

The 49ers, if one listens to Benson and officials from other teams, work in ways both devious and outrageous. The Saints owner had offered Sanders \$4 million a year for four years, and he absolutely refused to believe Deion would find that less is more. Cowboys owner Jerry Jones contended the 49ers were mortgaging their future for the present, loading up with player bonuses that would have to be fulfilled almost to the turn of the century. "You can get in trouble buying on credit," Jones said.

"I have always been amazed by the propensity of pro sports teams to act against their self-interest when it comes to

the salary cap," said Mike Brown, general manager of the Cincinnati Bengals, a franchise that by its record would appear to work against its self-interest on the field of play. "We've seen the creative workings of several teams in the NBA when it comes to getting around the cap. Now we've got our own creative geniuses at work on the West Coast. I'm not upset about it, because it's a form of silliness I've grown to accept."

Underlying that bombast is this simple truth: Policy found a loophole in the bargaining agreement, and he exploited it. There's no salary cap in 1999, and the 49ers have renegotiated many contracts and deferred great amounts of money until then. And because very few football contracts are guaranteed, the Niners only have to worry about paying the prorated bonuses—and winning. Policy knows the only thing the spoiled folk in the Bay Area accept is a championship football team.

Beginning with the 1981 season, the 49ers reached the NFC Championship Game eight times in 13 years. Four times

they won the game and reached the Super Bowl, and each of those four times they won. Yet in three of the past four years the 49ers lost the conference title game, and therein lies the rub.

"I get the impression other teams are very upset with us," says Policy. "Everybody else expected us to go down the drain. Well, we went out and did things very sensibly. The contracts make sense from a cash-flow standpoint and a market value standpoint. And we are not mortgaging the future. We have a solid team under contract."

Before the first game of this season, which turned out to be a Monday night destruction of the Los Angeles Raiders, that team seemed sufficiently balanced to challenge the Cowboys. However, Barton and guard Ralph Tamm, two of the starters on the offensive line, were lost in the opening minutes.

Then center Jesse Sapolu was hurt in the second game, as was defensive end



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Richard Dent, another spring signee. Then Wallace, the other high-priced offensive tackle, was hurt in Week 3.

In the fifth game, against the Philadelphia Eagles, the 49ers were perfectly awful. The subs on the offensive line couldn't block. The high-priced defenders couldn't tackle. Ah, but the fans at Candlestick could boo. Final score, Eagles 40, 49ers 8. It was San Francisco's worst home defeat in 27 years.

The issue isn't how much money one spends but what one gets for the money. If Deion sprains his ankle, as he did before the game against the Eagles, the style of payment is inconsequential. You obtain the players you think will help, and then say a few hosannas for their health.

"We did our homework," says Policy regarding the 49ers' talent quest. "The ownership gave us the opportunity to do the only thing I felt we could do to stay alive and compete."

In some cases, the only thing the 49ers could do was squirm and squeeze and nibble. It tortured the team to trade backup quarterback Bono to Kansas City, leaving only second-year man Elvis Grbac and

practice squad vet Bill Musgrave, who between them have about a thimbleful of experience. But the Niners needed Bono's \$1.5 million salary, the way they needed Rathman's \$900,000 and tight end Jamie Williams' \$600,000 and linebacker Keith DeLong's \$1 million and linebacker Bill Romanowski's \$1.2 million. When Romanowski returned to Candlestick as a member of the Eagles, he gloated about justice and revenge and other abstracts. The 49ers did what they had to do.

"We wouldn't have made all those changes, dropped and traded some of our players, had it not been for the cap," Policy says. "But we had no choice. We had to make decisions. Everybody had to make decisions."

The decision Rice made, for example, was to forego some of his money. With the Niners out of maneuvering room, the star

receiver agreed to release \$170,000 from incentives he almost surely would have earned so the team could field a five-man practice squad. He didn't just move the money around; Rice allowed it to be taken from him.

"This is Jerry's 10th year," says Jim Steiner, Rice's agent, "and he's done extremely well, both on and off the field. Eddie and Carmen have done a lot for him. He was glad to return the favor."

Then Rice was glad to approve Sanders. Not wishing to disturb the camaraderie of the locker room, Policy made certain his stars would welcome another in the firmament. "Why not?" Rice said with a laugh. "Now I won't have him guarding me, at least the rest of this season."

The \$5 million option clause in Sanders' contract included a \$3 million down payment that would count against the '94

Here's a look at some of the financial maneuvering by the San Francisco 49ers that enabled the team to meet the salary cap and continue to thrive:

HOLDOVER PLAYERS

Player	Original 1993 salary	Adjusted 1993 salary	1994 salary
Steve Young	\$5,750,000	Same	\$4,025,000
Jerry Rice	2,000,000	Same	3,100,000
Harris Barton	975,000	\$2,500,000	1,750,000
Steve Wallace	975,000	2,500,000*	1,750,000
John Taylor	1,225,000	2,200,000*	1,340,000
Brent Jones	900,000	1,700,000	950,000
Dennis Brown	1,550,000	Same	800,000
Ricky Watters	800,000	Same	700,000
Dana Stubblefield	483,000	Same	616,000

*Includes bonus.

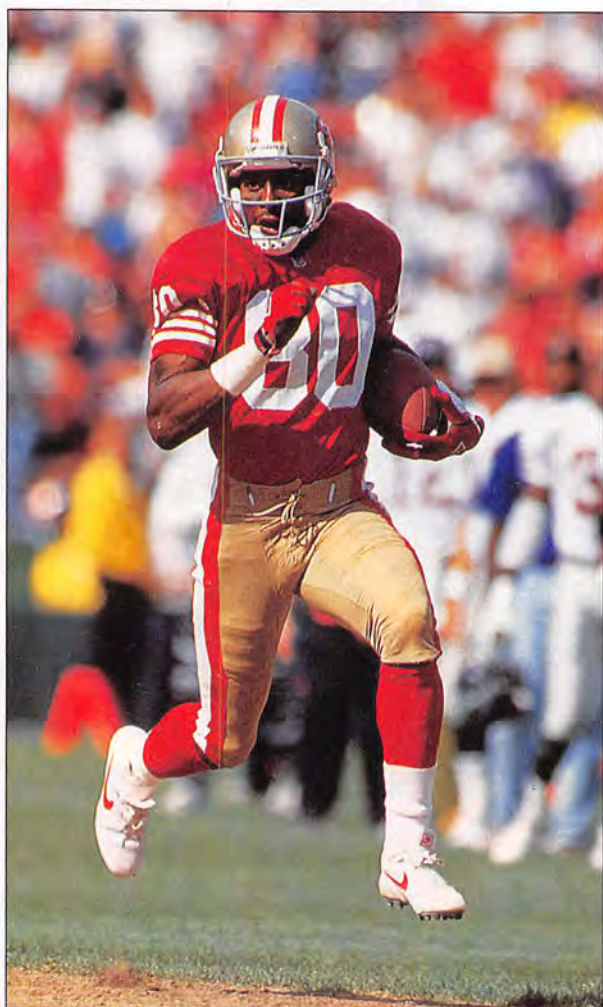
GONE FROM TEAM

Player	1993 salary	1994 salary if with 49ers
Steve Bono	\$2,250,000	\$1,550,000
Bill Romanowski	1,516,667	1,516,667
Keith DeLong	1,300,000	1,000,000
Ted Washington	663,000	713,000
Odessa Turner	747,000	547,000
Tom Rathman	985,000	No contract
Guy McIntyre	900,000	No contract
Mike Walter	875,000	No contract
Roy Foster	708,333	No contract
Jamie Williams	650,000	No contract

NEW TO TEAM

Player	1994 salary
Deion Sanders	\$1,134,000*
Ken Norton	1,300,000
Bryant Young (R)	1,100,000
Gary Plummer	1,000,000
William Floyd (R)	900,000
Toi Cook	162,000*
Rickey Jackson	162,000*

*Plus incentives. (R) = Rookie.



OTTO GREULEZ/ALBINO

'Tis better to give and receive: Rice gladly made room for Deion, saying, "Now I won't have him guarding me."

cap—a requirement impossible for the 49ers to fulfill. That means Sanders surely will be a free agent next spring. And so San Francisco will get on the carousel once more. Says Policy: "It's like this: If you have a chance to date Michelle Pfeiffer for a year, even if you know she wouldn't marry you, would you do it? Well, we have a chance to have Deion Sanders for a year, and we're doing it."

What they hope to do, need to do, is get past the Cowboys and everyone else in the NFC and go to the Super Bowl. Otherwise, well—cough, cough—the alternative is not particularly appealing.

"I think I may be thrown into a live volcano if all this doesn't work," Policy said after the Sanders signing. "That's the bad news," DeBartolo interjected. "The good news is he'll be dead."

Better he goes to Disney World, the place that delights in being labeled "Mickey Mouse." ■

ART SPANDER has been writing about the San Francisco 49ers since 1979. Like most sportswriters these days, he carries a calculator to figure salary caps.



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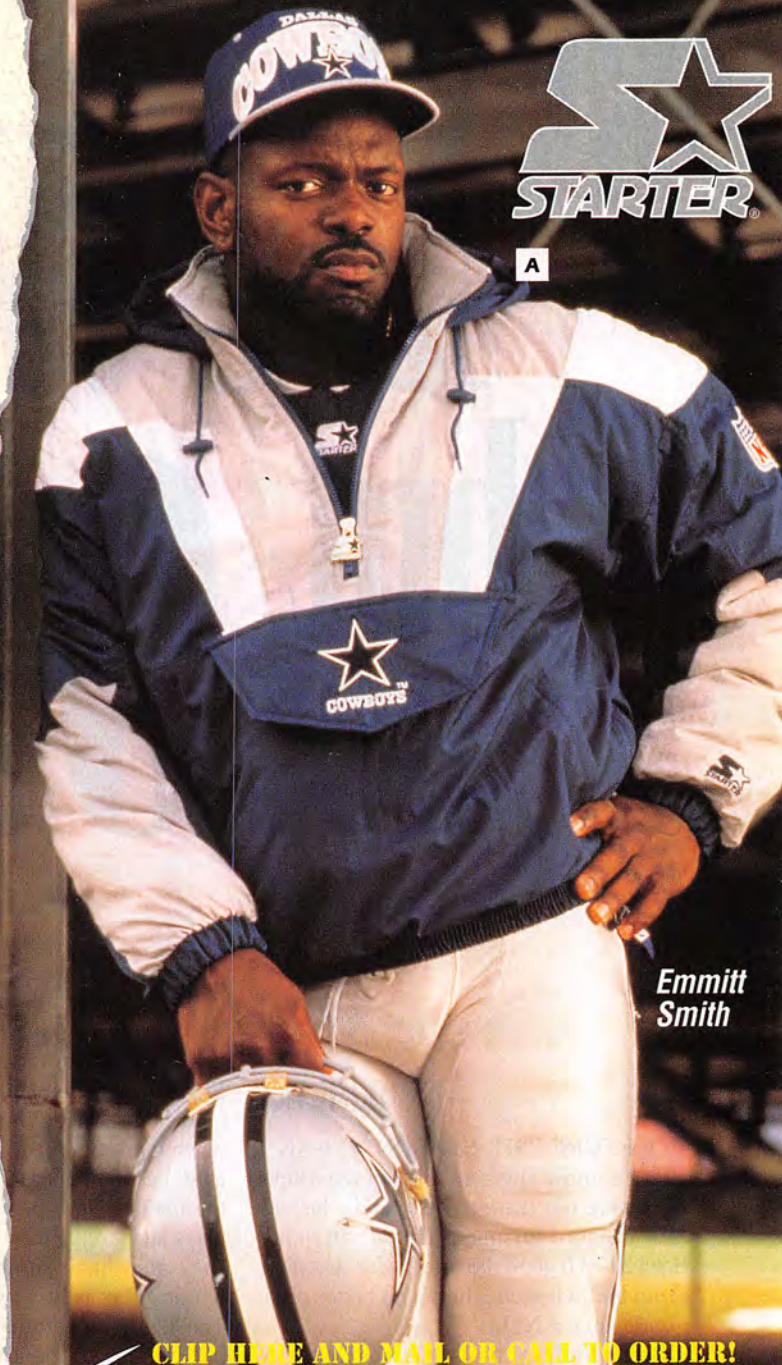
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Down but not Out

Mike Ditka and Bob Trumpy agree that the 49ers have overcome early-season problems to become the Super Bowl favorites

NFC

By **MIKE DITKA**

BEFORE THE SEASON BEGAN I thought the San Francisco 49ers were the team to beat, and I haven't changed my mind. They'll win Super Bowl 29—I'll go to the grave with that pick. From top to bottom, there's no better organization in the NFL.

Nevertheless, first-year coach Barry Switzer has done an outstanding job with the Dallas Cowboys, and their defense has never been better. The Cowboys can't be discounted.

The Minnesota Vikings and the Philadelphia Eagles also have the potential to stick around in the playoffs for a while. Defense makes the Vikings and Eagles tick, and defense can carry a team through the postseason. Ultimately, though, the 49ers will rise to the top.

San Francisco 49ers

What's gone right: Injuries hurt the 49ers earlier in the season. They lost their entire offensive line but still hung in there. The 49ers are adaptable, flexible—they

make adjustments and continue to find ways to win. They even lost some key defensive players for a while, including end Richard Dent, but still won.

Free-agent acquisition Ken Norton is playing pretty well at linebacker. He's probably the best athlete the team's ever had in the middle. Now the 49ers are making big plays and forcing turnovers on defense, and they also have some talent on special teams. This is an extremely solid team. The 49ers can get the ball to so many people: running back Ricky Watters, tight end Brent Jones, wide receivers Jerry Rice and John Taylor.

Obstacles ahead: As with Dallas, injuries are the key for the 49ers. Without Watters or quarterback Steve Young, San Francisco would be hard-pressed to get the job done. Backup Elvis Grbac is a good young quarterback, but he's certainly not ready to play now. The 49ers also can't afford to lose any of the players who now are back after being sidelined earlier in the year. For instance, offensive tackle Harris Barton, who missed the first chunk of the season with a torn triceps, needs to be at 100%.

Nevertheless, this team stays on an even keel. It doesn't get overconfident. The 49ers' problems come when they go against teams that play great defense, such



Cover photo credits: Troy Aikman and Steve Young by Steve Woltmann (3); Wayne Gretzky by Bruce Bennett (4); J.D. Cuban/Allsport; Tom DiPace (2); Allen Rice/Bob Rosato Sports Photography; Anthony Neste (2); Chuck Rydlowski; Bryan Yablonsky

as the Eagles, who trounced San Francisco 40-8 on October 2. Their 21-14 defeat of the Dallas Cowboys on November 13 helped their confidence a lot.

Ditka's bottom line: This is a great organization. The 49ers are resilient and know how to make things happen. I picked them to win the Super Bowl before the season began, and I'm not backing off.

Trumpy's bottom line: This is San Francisco's best chance to win the Super Bowl in years. The 49ers' injuries took place early, and they muddled through them. Cornerback Deion Sanders is the best acquisition any team has made this

Young shrugged off this sandwich job to make the 49ers the team to beat.



ALLEN KEEL/JOE RONATO SPORT PHOTOGRAPHY

year, and Watters is running hard.

Dallas Cowboys

What's gone right: Barry Switzer has fit in with the Cowboys exactly the way I thought he would. He changed the things he felt he needed to change, yet he has taken a more laid-back approach than his predecessor, Jimmy Johnson. Switzer lets his assistant coaches do their jobs, and they have been extremely successful.

The Cowboys might be better on defense now than they ever have been. Both the players and coaches can take credit for that. Defensive end Charles Haley is giving Dallas great production; he's the catalyst on defense. A year ago everybody attributed the defense's success to Ken Norton; that might have been true then, but now Haley is the man. Haley sets the tempo, and the rest of the defense comes up to his level.

Obstacles ahead: There is only one problem with Dallas' defense: I think teams have found they can throw deep against it. That's the only way the Cowboys can be hurt. Just ask Steve Young, who connected with Jerry Rice for a 57-yard TD pass in the 49ers win on November 13.

If the Cowboys lose quarterback Troy Aikman, who has taken some nasty shots this year, they're in trouble. Although backup Rodney Peete isn't bad, nobody can run that offense better than Aikman. He's an outstanding player, a tough leader. His teammates respect him and are willing to follow him.

Another guy the Cowboys can't afford to lose is running back Emmitt Smith. If Smith were to go down, the Cowboys would have to change their offense because they wouldn't be able to run the ball. Dallas has lost offensive tackle Erik Williams, who sustained season-ending injuries in a car accident at the end of October. Given Williams' status, if something happens to Smith, the Cowboys will have major problems.

Ditka's bottom line: The Cowboys are throwing the ball to wide receiver Alvin Harper more often because opposing

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San Francisco over Dallas

San Diego over Miami

SUPER BOWL

San Francisco over San Diego



teams are trying to stop Michael Irvin. But Harper's a good receiver, and the Cowboys have a solid tight end in Jay Novacek. Throw in fullback Daryl Johnston with all of Dallas' other stars, and there's no question this is a solid team.

Trumpy's bottom line: The Cowboys are vulnerable. The injury to Williams was a huge loss.

Minnesota Vikings

What's gone right: Take away quarterback Warren Moon and the Vikings would be simply average on offense. Nevertheless, their depth at running back—with Terry Allen, Robert Smith, Amp Lee, and Scottie Graham—probably is better than that of other team. The Vikings also have good receivers. Cris Carter is an amazing guy, fearless when he comes over the middle and catches the ball, and Jake Reed also is playing outstanding football.

The team's defense is as good as any in the league at getting into the opposition's backfield and creating turmoil. The Vikings make plays on defense that are turned into touchdowns. In addition, nobody is running on them.

Jack Del Rio might be the most underrated linebacker in the league. He's tremendous against the run and pass, and he's a real leader. The Vikings haven't missed a beat since losing Chris Doleman, who was traded to the Atlanta Falcons in

the offseason. As a matter of fact, they might be better without him.

Obstacles ahead: I think Vikings coach Dennis Green has realized he has to take time off the clock and run the ball. He's gotten away from trying to be really explosive. If the Vikings are to make a serious run in the playoffs, Green has to stick with his plan. The running game must continue to click, and the defense has to keep making big plays. If the Vikings can do those things, they'll be OK—but if they let another quarterback drop back 70 times without sacking him once, as happened in their 26-20 loss to Drew Bledsoe and the New England Patriots in Week 11, they'll be in trouble.

Ditka's bottom line: The offensive line isn't bad, and the defense is outstanding. Despite the Patriots game, nobody is going to chew up this defense, and nobody is going to run the ball on it. Opponents have to worry about this team. The Vikings might still be around at the end.

Trumpy's bottom line: Moon is absolutely amazing. He might be one of the best two or three leaders at quarterback in the history of the game. This team's fate rests on his shoulders.

Philadelphia Eagles

What's gone right: This is an interesting team. Rich Kotite is a much better

coach than people give him credit for. Bud Carson is as good a defensive coordinator as there is in the league.

The Eagles defense is solid against both the run and the pass. Believe it or not, defensive tackle William Perry still plays well against the run, and the team also gets a lot of production from defensive tackle Andy Harmon. Everybody talks about the players Philly lost on defense, such as linebacker Seth Joyner, but the loss of linebacker Byron Evans in Week 11 could be harder to recover from. Evans, who suffered as severely broken leg, was playing extremely well.

On offense, running back Herschel Walker still is as solid a player as a team could have. He's unselfish and is proficient in every aspect of the game. Rookie running back Charlie Garner also has been a factor, despite some injury problems.

Obstacles ahead: The big question for the Eagles is whether their offensive line can hold up. The line has to be able to protect quarterback Randall Cunningham.

The Eagles will go as far as Cunningham can take them. Cunningham must stay healthy. Maybe it's his maturity, but I don't think Cunningham's trying to do as many things as he once did. He realizes he can't win by himself, and he's trying to put himself in a position where he can play every game. He's not taking as many

chances—when he's forced to take a chance he still throws his body around, but he doesn't do it as often as he did in the past.

Ditka's bottom line: Cunningham seems to be a bit more under control. He's a bit more intelligent about what he does, and he's not killing himself. That's the key. I like the Eagles; I see them doing something in the playoffs.

Trumpy's bottom line: Cunningham is the bottom line. He's the magic elixir, the type of guy who can take over a football game. In addition, to the surprise of many, Philadelphia has one hell of a defense. Carson has done an unbelievable job manipulating that defense to make it one of the best in the league.

Forget everything else: As Cunningham goes, so go the Eagles.



JONATHAN DANIEL/ALLSPORT

The Pack must develop more options than just its sterling Sharpe.

Green Bay Packers

What's gone right: The Packers have an outstanding defense. First-year defensive coordinator Fritz Shurmur has done a tremendous job. Defensive ends Reggie White and Sean Jones are great players, and the defense is very effective inside; that was apparent in Green Bay's 33-6 victory over the Chicago Bears on October 31.

Bryce Paup is one of the league's most underrated linebackers. He's making as many big plays as anybody in the NFL. The Packers miss linebacker Tony Bennett, who signed with the Indianapolis Colts as a free agent in the offseason, but it hasn't affected what they do in their schemes.

Obstacles ahead: The main thing coach Mike Holmgren is trying to convey to the players is the importance of running the ball better. They can do it; in fact, I think they have started to do it.

As far as quarterback Brett Favre goes, Holmgren is stressing three things to him: Don't turn over the football, don't make mistakes, and don't try to win every game single-handedly. Favre is getting better at that. He's not trying to make every play a big play; he's not throwing the ball away stupidly as often as he was. As a result, Favre is starting to turn into a good football player, which will be a big factor for the



SCOTT CUNNINGHAM

Packers down the stretch. Favre does need to start throwing deep. Robert Brooks might be the man, especially since defenses are sitting down on Sterling Sharpe.

Ditka's bottom line: There's no question that Favre is beginning to learn what Holmgren is teaching him. At the beginning of the year, I believed this was a play-off team. I still do.

Trumpy's bottom line: Sharpe still is probably the league's best receiver. Although it's a bit underappreciated, the Packers certainly have a playoff-caliber defense. Like Philadelphia, Green Bay is a team to watch.

Detroit Lions

What's gone right: Despite what some people might think, there's nothing wrong with this team. The Lions can beat the crap out of anybody on any given Sunday—they proved that when they beat the Cowboys 20-17 in overtime earlier this season—and Barry Sanders, who ran for 237 yards on Tampa Bay in Week 11, is outstanding.

Wide receivers Herman Moore and Brett Perriman are outstanding, kick returner Mel Gray still is able to make things happen on special teams, and I love middle linebacker Chris Spielman and safety Bennie Blades. The Lions have a good defense, and they're starting to pull themselves out of the sink.

Obstacles ahead: The Lions really haven't gotten the production they wanted at quarterback. Before Scott Mitchell broke his hand—an injury that could sideline him for the remainder of the season—he wasn't throwing well. The Lions might be better off with Dave Krieg at quarterback, believe me.

They need to use Sanders more often. Detroit has to devise as many different ways as possible to get the ball in his hands.

The rumors that the coaching staff might be replaced after the season have been tough on it, I'm sure. Those guys feel like they have nooses around their necks. They're fighting for their lives and trying to win games.

Ditka's bottom line: The Lions have won the NFC Central two times in the past three years. Although they aren't a bad team, I don't know if they can turn around their season. It's difficult to tell if they know how to win.

Trumpy's bottom line: Coach Wayne Fontes has to be a little more definitive with his decisions, and the Lions must find a quarterback who can throw the ball. I hope Detroit makes the playoffs just so we can watch Sanders. For sheer entertainment, there's no better player in pro football to watch.

Chicago Bears

What's gone right: When quarterback Steve Walsh started winning, they should have stayed with him rather than go back to first-stringer Erik Kramer. It's not always a matter of talent; it's chemistry, a feeling you have when a certain player is in there. For whatever reasons, the team has played better with Walsh on the field. I think the Bears need to ride him until something really bad happens.

With Donnell Woolford, Mark Carrier, and Shawn Gayle, the Bears have a good secondary. The team also is strong at linebacker.

Obstacles ahead: For the Bears to make the playoffs, they must play good defense and run the football. But they can do that. I think they have some solid personnel on their defensive line, but the players can't seem to put a lot of pressure on the quarterback, and some weeks they can't stop the run. Several players are trying to do more than they're capable of doing; they're trying to help their teammates instead of doing their own jobs.

Ditka's bottom line: If they can win another big game like the one over Miami and get some confidence back defensively, the Bears still can be a factor. They play good defense when they do what they need to do. It's simply a matter of everyone doing their job and playing hard all the time.

Trumpy's bottom line: For what little offense the Bears produce, and for as sloppy as Walsh can look, the Bears play better as a team than anyone else in the league.

They get a lot out of a little. When the Bears are able to keep games close, they find a way to win. That's the key.

Atlanta Falcons

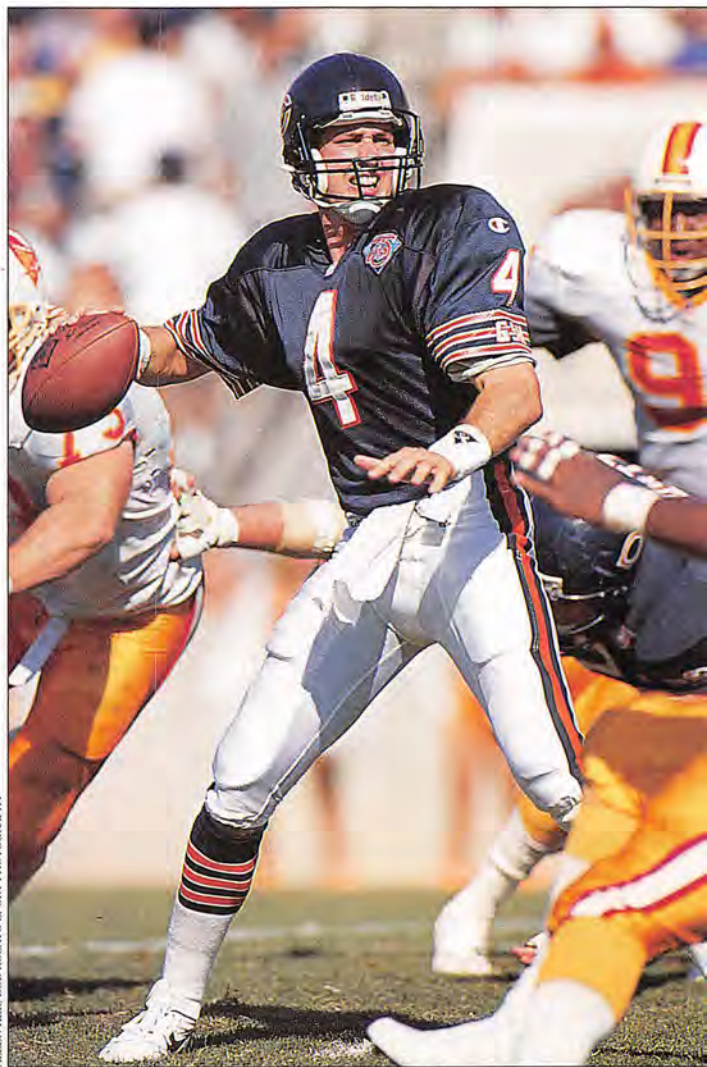
What's gone right: The Falcons are playing better on the defensive side of the ball than they did last year. They're not great, but they aren't playing badly. At least they aren't taking some of the chances they took in the past by blitzing everybody.

With Andre Rison, Terance Mathis, and

rookie Bert Emanuel, Atlanta's receivers are fairly strong. Jeff George also has given them some strength at quarterback. Although the offensive line has had some people hurt, it's basically been holding up.

Obstacles ahead: I just don't think you can win consistently in this league with the run-and-shoot offense. I believe the Falcons are finding that out. They are using running back Craig Heyward a little more frequently. If they can get out of the damn run-and-shoot, they can do some things.

Chris Doleman hasn't produced on



When the Bears began to play well—and win—with Walsh, it was time to throw out the depth chart.

defense. Guys have to learn that the grass isn't always greener on the other side of the fence unless you *make* it greener.

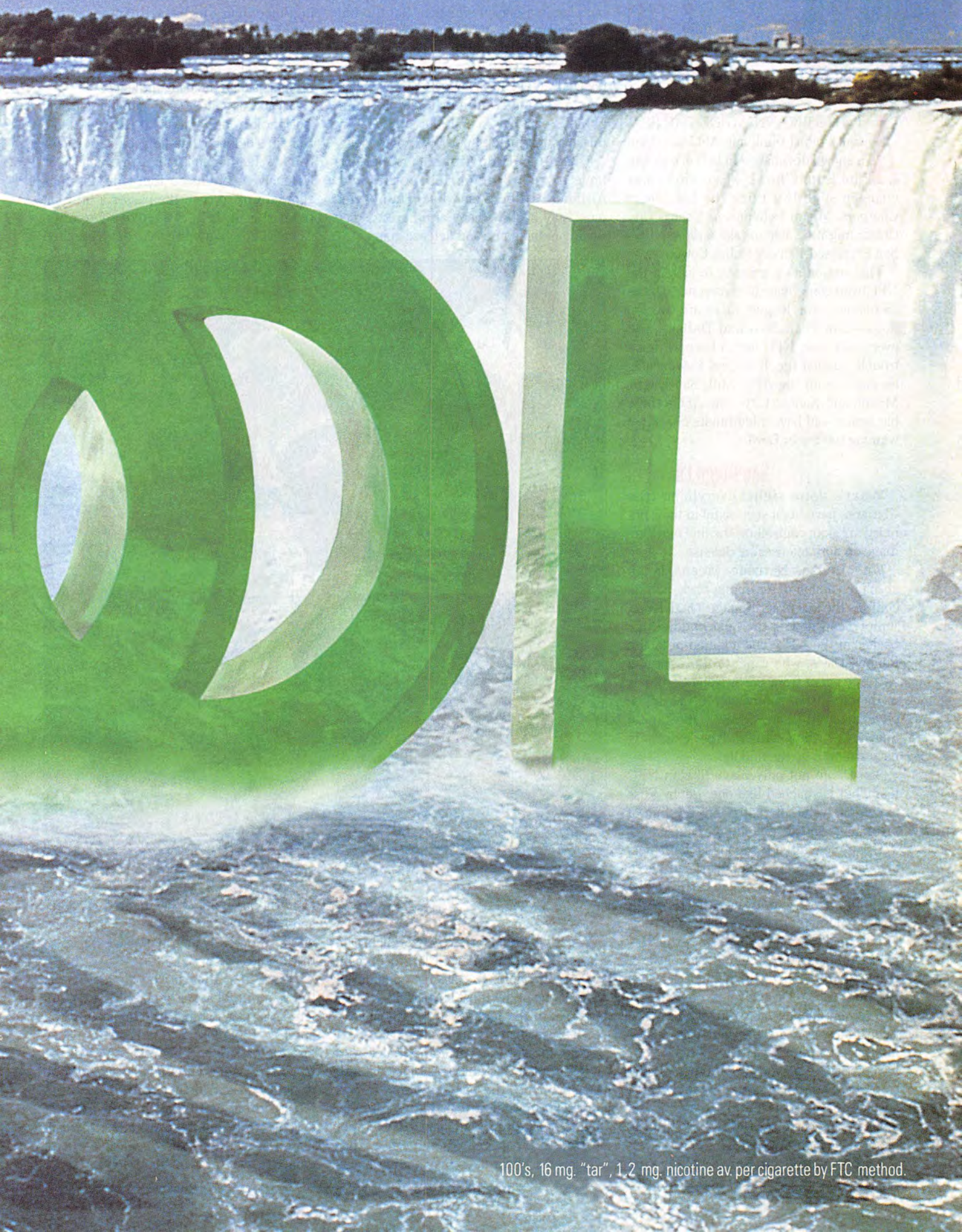
Ditka's bottom line: The Falcons just can't go anywhere with the run-and-shoot. That's my only opinion about them.

Trumpy's bottom line: The Falcons aren't there yet, but first-year coach June Jones should be complimented for the job he has done with George. Jones has accomplished a great deal in helping George to become a solid quarterback.



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AFC

By BOB TRUMPY

AT THE BEGINNING OF THE SEASON, I didn't think any AFC team had a snowball's chance in hell of winning the Super Bowl. My opinion has changed slightly. I think the San Diego Chargers, Miami Dolphins, or Kansas City Chiefs might be able to take out the NFC's San Francisco 49ers or Dallas Cowboys.

This season it's a mistake to look at the NFL from conference to conference. Of the 28 teams in the league, there are two top dogs—San Francisco and Dallas—and everybody else. NFC teams have as much trouble against the 49ers and Cowboys as do clubs from the AFC. Still, San Diego, Miami, and Kansas City—the AFC's three big teams—all have a legitimate chance of winning the Super Bowl.

San Diego Chargers

What's gone right: Everything. The Chargers have been successful in their primary mission: controlling the line of scrimmage on both offense and defense.

On offense, Natrone Means is an absolute cannon of a running back, and he controls the line of scrimmage. On defense, Junior Seau now is the best middle linebacker in the NFL. The addition of tackle Reuben Davis, who came to the Chargers as a free agent from the Arizona Cardinals in the offseason, has bolstered the defensive line. With Davis, Seau, and tackle Shawn Lee, the Chargers have extraordinary strength up the middle.

San Diego not only plays like an NFC team, but is coached like one. Bobby Ross knows the value of controlling the line of scrimmage and keeping things simple.

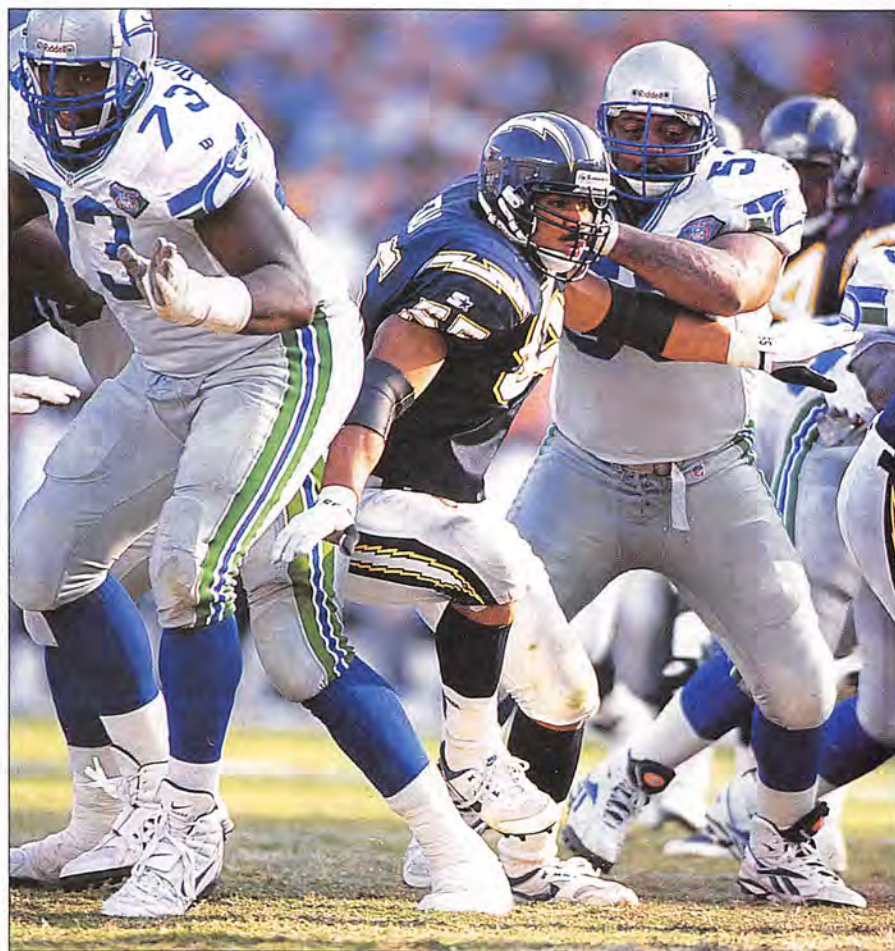
Obstacles ahead: Means is just a second-year player, but he's performed like a 10-year veteran. For as many carries as he gets, he rarely coughs up the ball. Nevertheless, there will be a lull in his performance at some point down the stretch—not a slump, just a lull. And in a lot of ways, this kid and third-down back Ronnie Harmon are San Diego's whole offense.

If something does go wrong with Means, I don't know how the Chargers can replace him for a game or two. They simply don't have a reserve player of that type. In addition, the health of quarterback Stan Humphries most assuredly is a concern, although his backup, Gale Gilbert, is capable of doing a decent job.

Trumpy's bottom line: My only con-

cern regarding the Chargers is their youth, which could make them susceptible to the big play in a playoff situation. But the way the numbers are starting to break out, San Diego might have all its playoff games in Jack Murphy Stadium, which is a tremendous advantage for a young team. If Means gets a second wind and Harmon, Humphries, Seau, Davis, and Lee stay healthy, this is a legitimate Super Bowl contender.

Ditka's bottom line: The Chargers have to keep Humphries on the field. Although Gilbert isn't bad, Humphries must stay healthy. They also have to keep their running game and defense going.



Seau and the San Diego defense have the Chargers in the middle of the hunt.

Miami Dolphins

What's gone right: Quarterback Dan Marino is on a mission. He has been simply unbelievable. I've always considered Marino one of the most strong-willed quarterbacks in the league; he seems able to spread his will to his teammates.

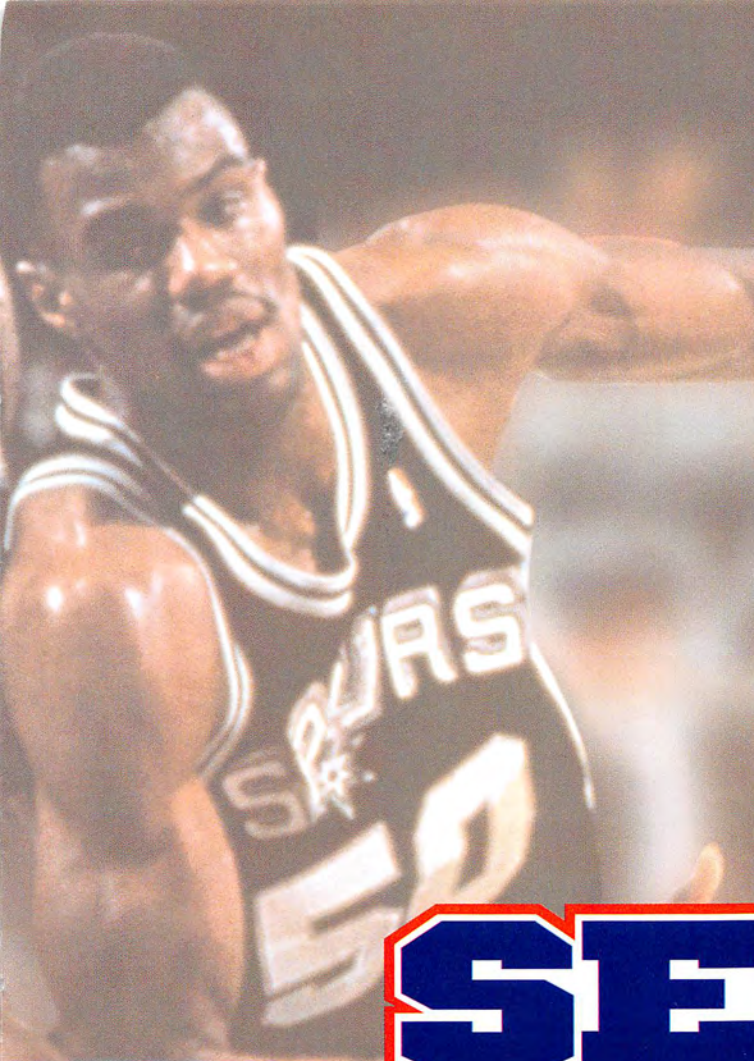
The discovery of Bernie Parmalee as a running back has alleviated just enough pressure from the passing game to add another dimension to Miami's offense. Teams can't simply sit back and expect Marino to try to beat them with a pass. Coach Don Shula likes his running backs

to run *and* catch, so he'd prefer the versatile Terry Kirby, who suffered a season-ending knee injury in Week 4. Parmalee has gotten it done on the ground, though—the Dolphins missed him in their Week 11 loss to the Bears—and Miami's offensive line remains one of the best in the NFL.

Bryan Cox's move from outside to inside linebacker adds a dimension to the Dolphins defense that didn't exist previously. Now teams can't run away from Cox. Defensive coordinator Tom Olivadotti has allowed Cox to rush the passer a little bit from the middle, a stroke of genius. Cornerback Troy Vincent has returned

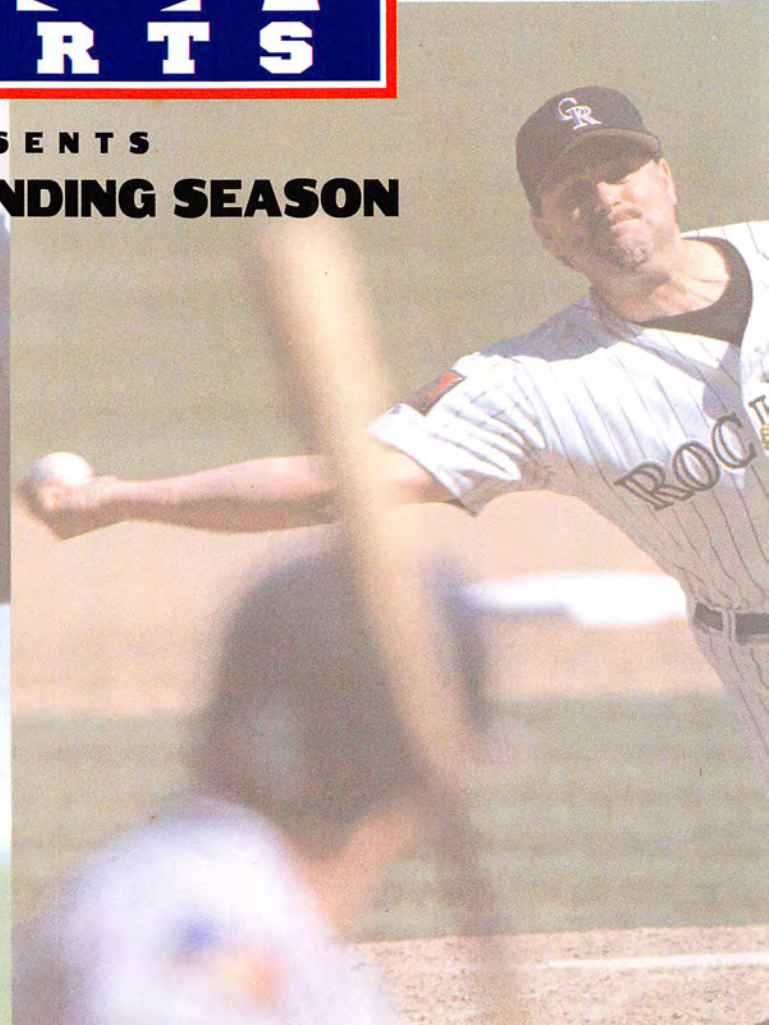
from the knee injury he suffered last year and has played better with each game. He's one of the best young defensive backs in the league.

Obstacles ahead: The biggest one is the loss of fullback Keith Byars, who suffered a season-ending knee injury in Week 10. It's a triple loss for the Dolphins: They lose his experience, his receiving skills—he had a team-high 49 catches before he went down—and his blocking ability. Byars is a tremendous lead blocker, and his absence from the field will affect the running game. In the loss to Chicago, Miami gained just 69 yards on the ground.



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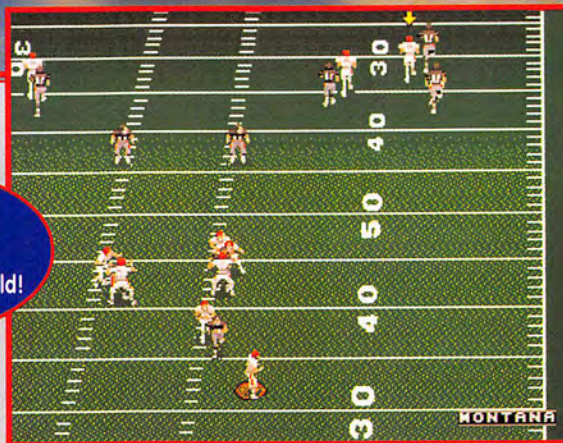
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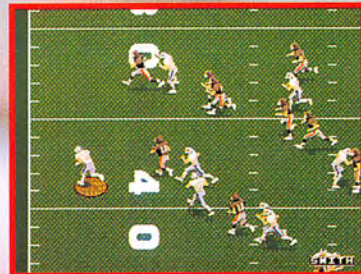


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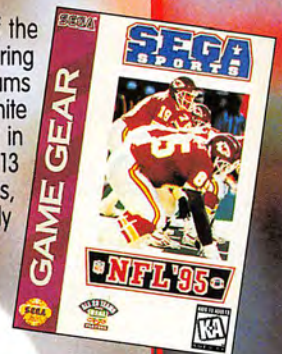
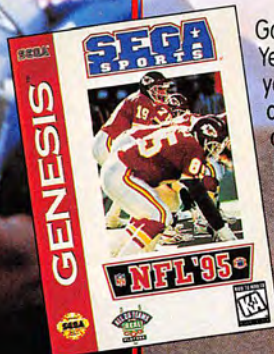
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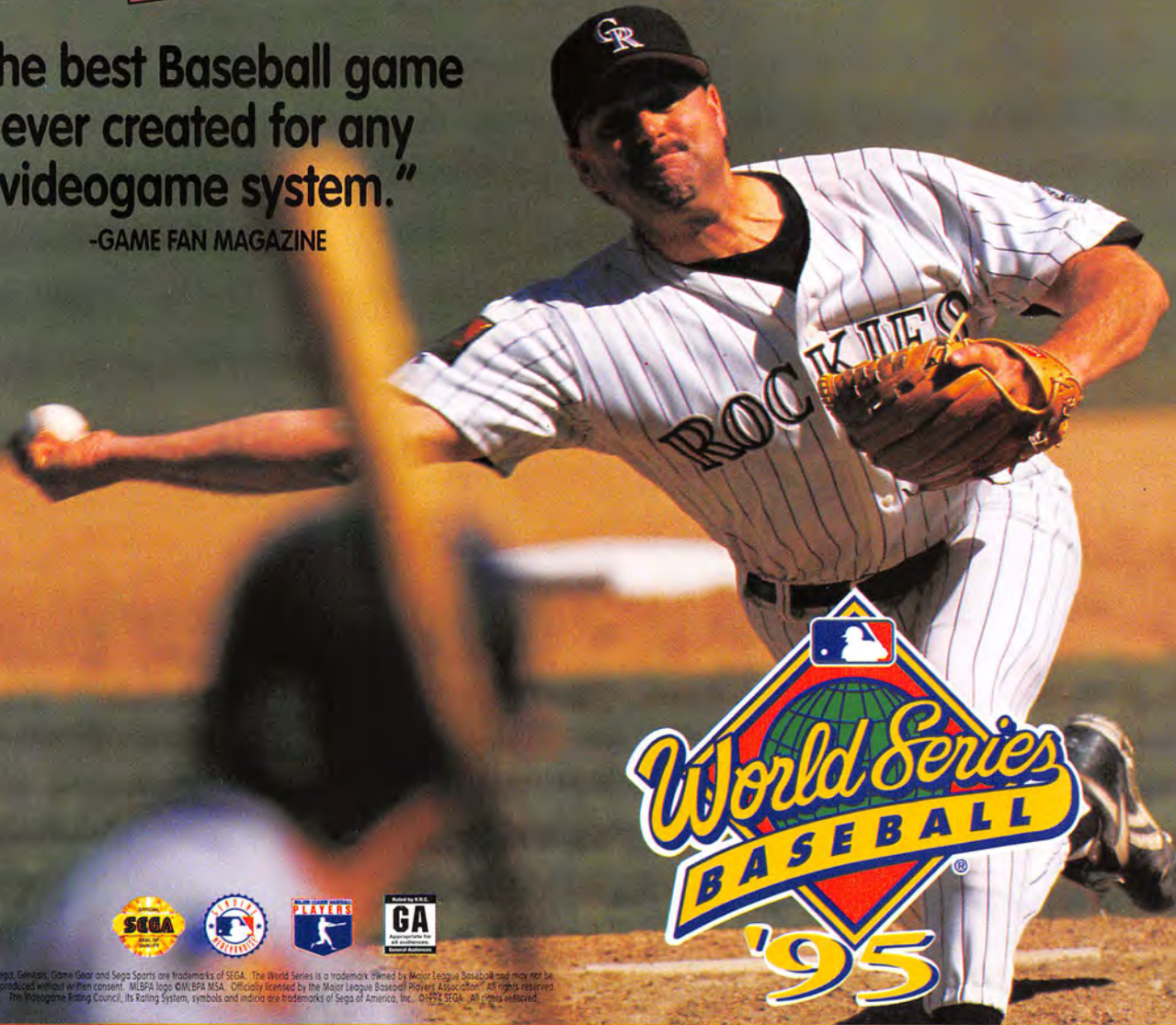


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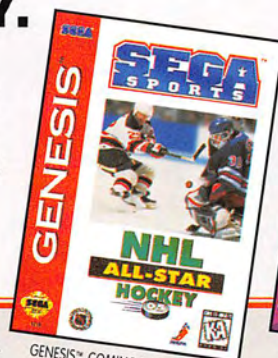
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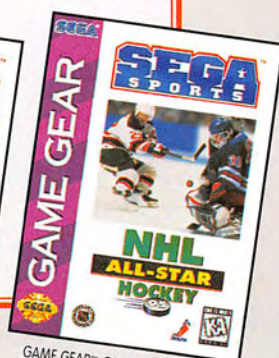
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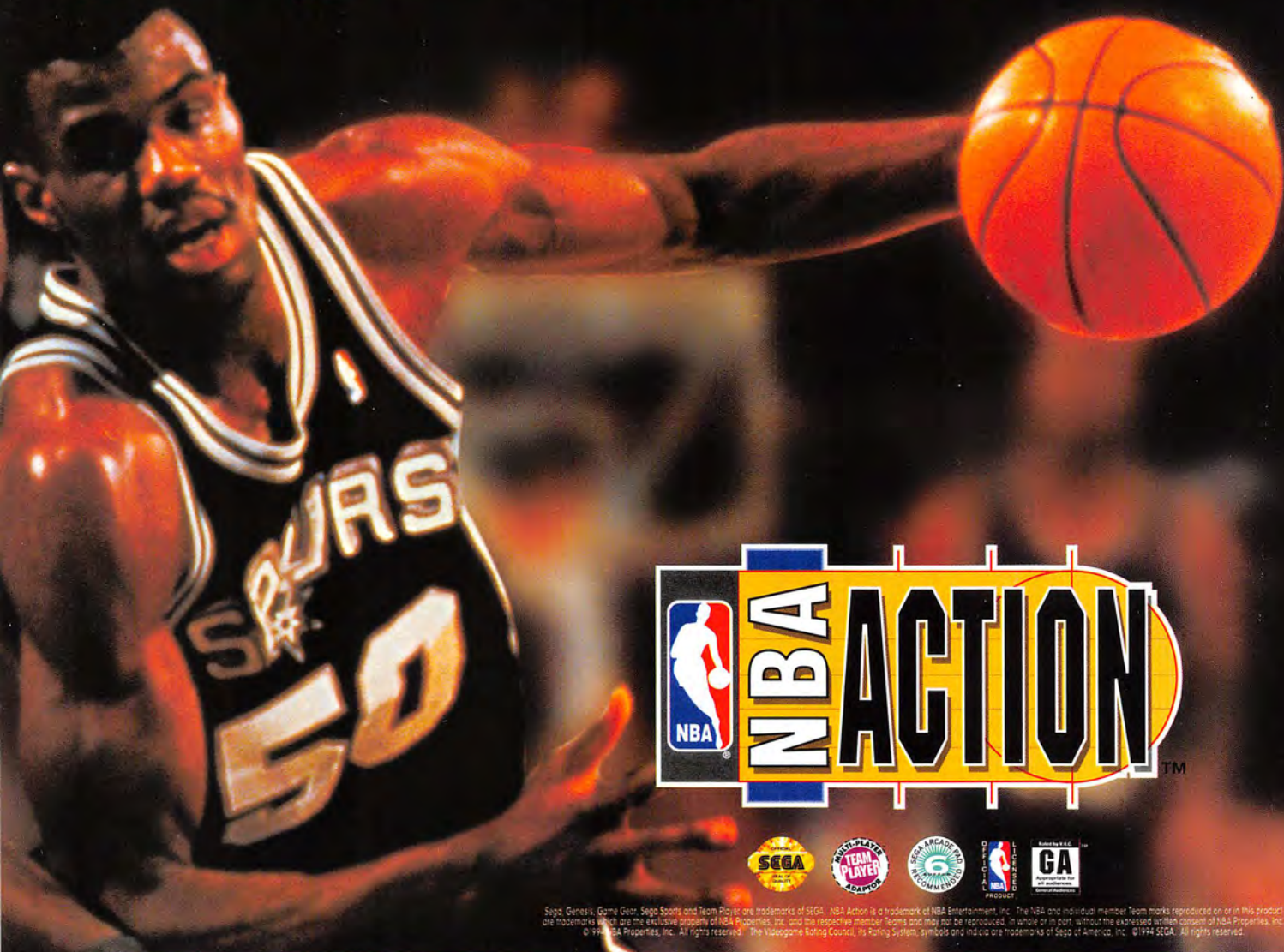
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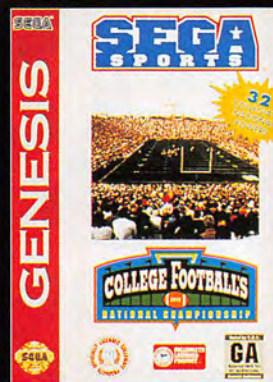
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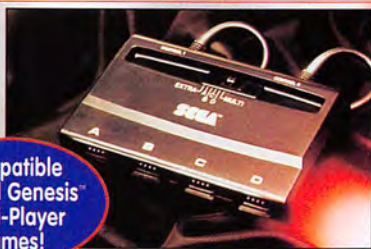


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SEGA SPORTS

Trumpy's bottom line: No one on Miami's roster can replace Byars. As a result, the Dolphins' Super Bowl chances drop slightly—just slightly.

Ditka's bottom line: Marino and Shula make the Dolphins the best team in the AFC right now. However, they also were the best team in the AFC at this point last year, and they went backward. They must be careful of that.

Cleveland Browns

What's gone right: Although quarterback Vinny Testaverde still throws his share of interceptions, the errant passes haven't destroyed Cleveland this season. The Browns' ability to overcome Testaverde's arm has been fairly remarkable. Backup quarterback Mark Rypien proved he can win with this club, too, leading the Browns to significant midseason victories over New England and Philadelphia when Testaverde was out because of a concussion.

The defense—which held the Eagles to 288 yards and seven points in Philadelphia in Week 11—has been unbelievable. Tackle Michael Dean Perry and safety Eric Turner are having great years. Cleveland's defense plays as a complete unit.

Additionally, an awful lot of the Browns' momentum comes from special teams. Every time they send Eric Metcalf back for a punt or kickoff return, they believe he can bring the ball back for six points.

Obstacles ahead: Injuries to Perry, Turner, Metcalf, or running back Leroy Hoard would be devastating. In addition, the Browns' schedule works against them. They must play two hellacious teams on the road at the end of the year—Dallas on December 10 and Pittsburgh on December 18. Those games could make or break this team. Still, Cleveland's stellar defense might be up to the task.

Trumpy's bottom line: If Cleveland doesn't have to rely on Testaverde to throw the ball, it will be a contender. But if the Browns get behind early in games and are forced to put the ball in the air, the weakest aspect of this team will be revealed.

Ditka's bottom line: Unless the Browns completely throw a hook, they will be a factor in the playoffs. Why? Because of the great job coach Bill Belichick has done with the defense and special teams. Cleveland is fortunate because Rypien is a tough guy who has been to the big dance, the Super Bowl. That will be a factor—if Testaverde turns out not to be the answer, Belichick won't be reluctant to go with Rypien.

Pittsburgh Steelers

What's gone right: All of the pluses for

this team are on the defensive side of the ball. The team's defenders come from everywhere; they give offenses a thousand different looks. The Steelers have the 11 most athletic defensive starters in the league. It's the NFL's quickest defense, and it creates numerous problems for offenses by doing so many different things well. On November 14 Pittsburgh simply buried the Buffalo Bills 23-10 on Monday night, when they made seven sacks and forced three turnovers.

Obstacles ahead: The biggest is keeping running back Barry Foster healthy; he has missed several games this year because of a knee injury. Obviously, having Foster on the field late in the season will help. Considering quarterback Neil O'Donnell's various injury problems, he has performed admirably. He also has to avoid being sidelined—but the good health of the starting quarterback is important for any team hoping to be a factor in the playoffs.

In order to be a Super Bowl contender, the Steelers need to force more turnovers, the way they did against the Bills. Considering how solid their defense is, they haven't been consistent there.

Trumpy's bottom line: If the Steelers have to rely on offense alone, they will have problems. But if their defense can take control of games early and thus shorten the field for their offense, they will go a long way in the playoffs.

Ditka's bottom line: Pittsburgh's problem is O'Donnell. How much better is he than backup Mike Tomczak? If you get down to the nitty-gritty, could Tomczak do the job? He might be able to. The Steelers have great people on defense. They put pressure on teams. I don't think anyone is going to score a lot of points on Pittsburgh.

Kansas City Chiefs

What's gone right: Most importantly, quarterback Joe Montana has stayed healthy; he's stayed vertical. Montana's offseason conditioning appears to have helped dramatically. He's been able to endure hits better than he did in '93.

The Montana magic has worked. After 15 seasons in the league, 16 regular-season games are a

necessary evil for Montana. He has the ability to elevate his play in the postseason, and having him in the huddle is Kansas City's magic ingredient.

The Chiefs also have benefited from shifting Derrick Thomas back to outside linebacker. Coach Marty Schottenheimer told me that moving Thomas to defensive end in '93 was an experiment, but in order for the experiment to work, end Neil Smith also had to move around a lot. So the experiment affected two players, not just one. Thomas had a career-low eight sacks in '93; putting him back at linebacker not only has helped him, but has anchored Smith in one spot. It's worked very well.

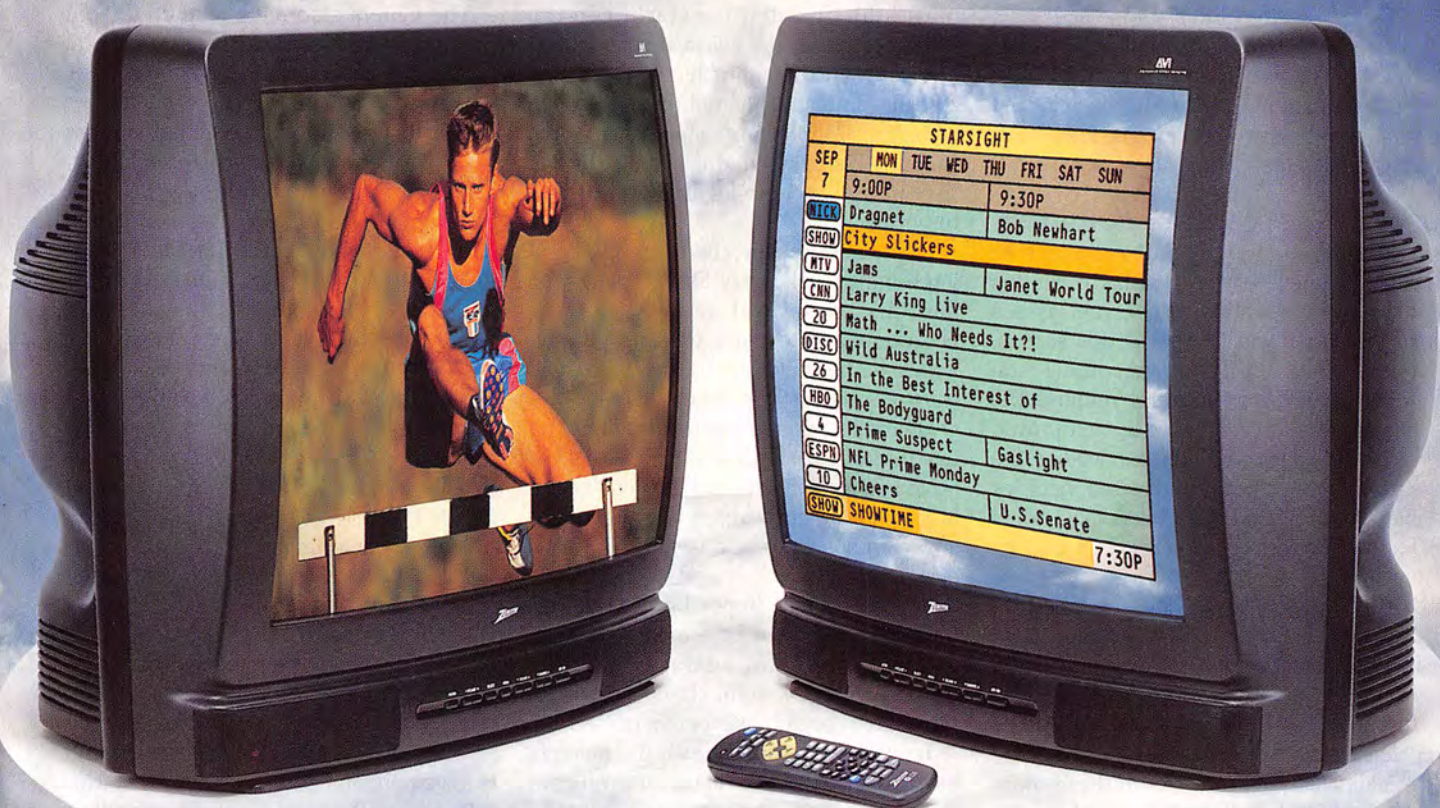
Obstacles ahead: Wide receiver J.J. Birden's health is a concern. He's the team's deep threat, but he has missed some playing time this year because of lower-back problems. The Chiefs missed tight end Keith Cash, who lost several games because of a knee injury.

Offensive tackle John Alt's continuing back ailments are troublesome; there is a considerable talent dropoff between Alt and his backups, Derrick Graham and Ricky Siglar. Alt has a good head and is experienced, having been in the league since 1984. On defense, the Chiefs' inability to stop the run is a tremendous obstacle.

Trumpy's bottom line: Kansas City's postseason outlook is this: Close, but no cigar. If the Chiefs can't get Alt healthy and keep him that way for the playoffs, their



AFC opponents haven't found it so easy to tie up Metcalf and the resurgent Browns this season.



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chances will decline considerably.

Ditka's bottom line: The Chiefs are good enough to make the playoffs, but I'm not sure they can win once they get there. Their offensive line hasn't been consistent.

New York Jets

What's gone right: This is the first year together for head coach Pete Carroll, defensive coordinator Greg Robinson, and offensive coordinator Ray Sherman, and they have worked very well as a unit. Win or lose, the Jets play hard.

The Jets rely heavily on Boomer Esiason. He takes a little more abuse than most quarterbacks because he's willing to hang on to the ball to make a play. The Jets also have received a tremendous performance from Rob Moore, who was a major catalyst earlier this season, despite having a broken hand.

The Jets also have done a good job rotating their defensive linemen in and out of the lineup to keep them fresh. That's a tremendous chance to take. Dallas did it a couple of years ago, and it worked, and I think that's why the Jets gave it a try. Outside linebacker Mo Lewis, tackle Donald Evans, and end Jeff Lageman are having stellar years—I mean, absolutely amazing years.

Obstacles ahead: So much of what the Jets do rests on the shoulders of Esiason,

who has missed some playing time this season due to injuries. He must stay healthy. The other obstacle is third-year tight end Johnny Mitchell. You can stick with a kid who runs the wrong patterns and drops passes only so long. He's a definite obstacle.

Trumpy's bottom line: Simply put, the Jets are not quite there yet.

Ditka's bottom line: The Jets have defeated Buffalo twice this year, so I think you have to say they're better than the Bills. They must keep Esiason healthy, and they can't continue to drop as many passes as they have. That's what made them go backward last year.

Buffalo Bills

What's gone right: Defensive end Bruce Smith is having another spectacular year, as is running back Thurman Thomas. Those players continue to perform at a remarkable level. The Bills have made some slight adjustments by not going with the hurry-up offense as often as they once did. Quarterback Jim Kelly still throws—and throws well.

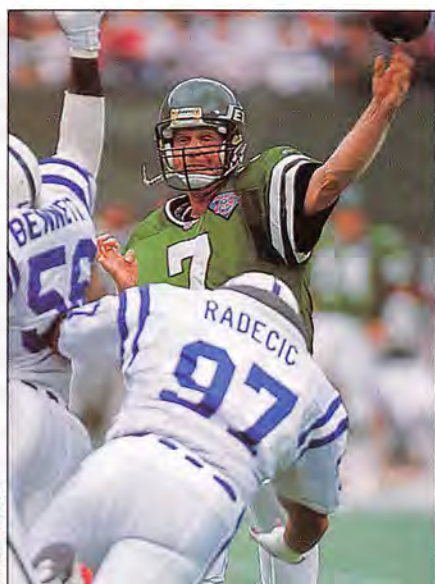
In big games, there is no better team. If the Bills simply can make it to the playoffs—it doesn't matter if it's at home or on the road or as a wild-card team—they still have the ability to be a factor. Sure, they've lost some games they should have won this

year, but in a playoff situation these guys have a big memory bank to tap into. They know how to win in the playoffs.

Obstacles ahead: Buffalo's biggest challenge is to win enough games to make the playoffs.

Trumpy's bottom line: If the Bills find a way to get into the playoffs, they can't be discounted. They are not going to go down quietly; they won't fade to the middle of the pack without one hell of a fight.

Ditka's bottom line: Buffalo is an enigma. The Bills have talent, but they aren't tough. They play one week; then they don't play the next. To me, that's never the sign of a great team. I mean, you might get beat from one week to the next, but you go down while playing consistently good football. I don't see them doing that. You won't see Buffalo back in the Super Bowl this season



As long as Esiason hangs in there, the Jets are a good bet to go wild.

because the Bills won't have home-field advantage—and without home-field advantage they won't go anywhere.

Los Angeles Raiders

What's gone right: Not much. This has been a tumultuous year for the Raiders. Although they have a slight chance to make the playoffs, I think the Raiders would just as soon have this season end as quickly as possible. The offseason probably is more important for the Raiders than the playoffs. Where do they go from here?

Obstacles ahead: The Raiders have to find a way to get all 11 players involved in the offense. With the exception of Tim Brown, their wide receivers are nonexistent. They simply disappear. All that speed the Raiders have at wideout is a myth because they don't use it—Alexander Wright, Raghbir Ismail, and James Jett don't get the ball. But this team's chief obstacles are obvious, and they have little to do with what's happening on the field. Most of their problems are taking place off the field.

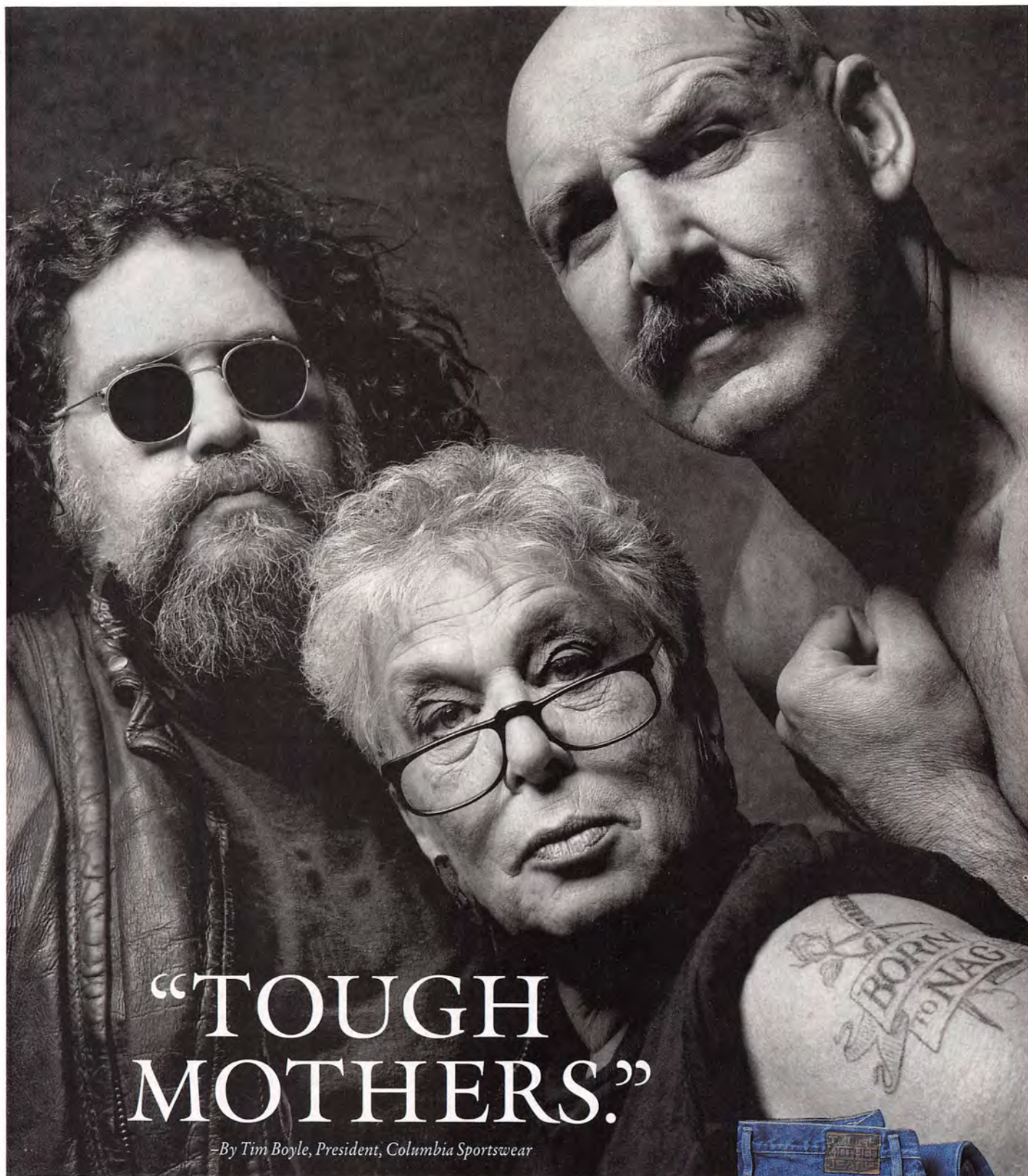
Trumpy's bottom line: As I said, the Raiders can't wait for this season to end.

Ditka's bottom line: The Raiders have made me look bad because I originally thought they might make it to the Super Bowl. Their biggest problem is that they don't have the offensive line they had in the past. They don't protect quarterback Jeff Hostetler and don't run-block as well as they once did. I love Hostetler, but he's getting his ass kicked. He's really getting beaten up. ■

Special contributors MIKE DITKA and BOB TRUMPY worked with senior editor KENNETH LEIKER and associate editor WILLIAM WAGNER in preparing this article.



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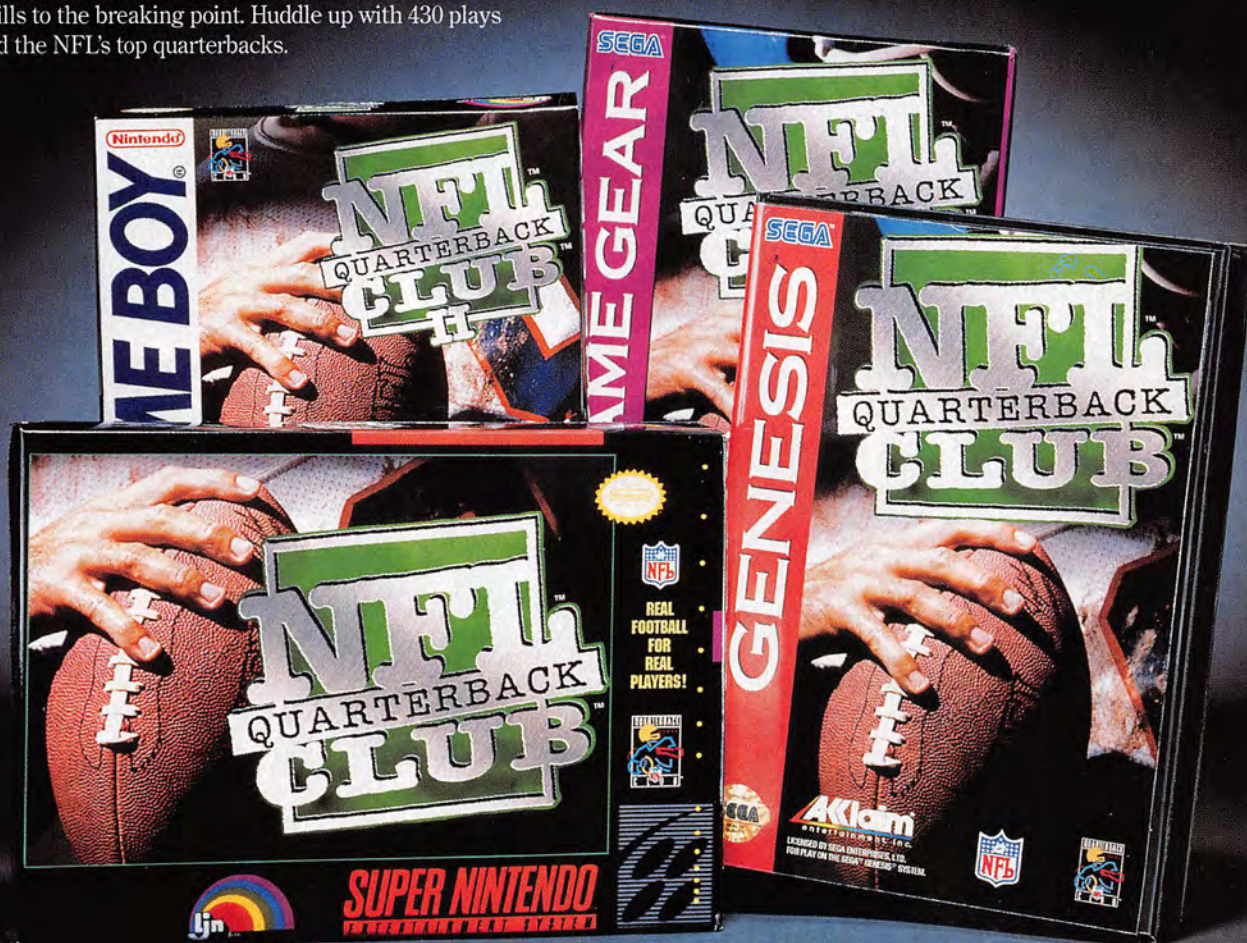
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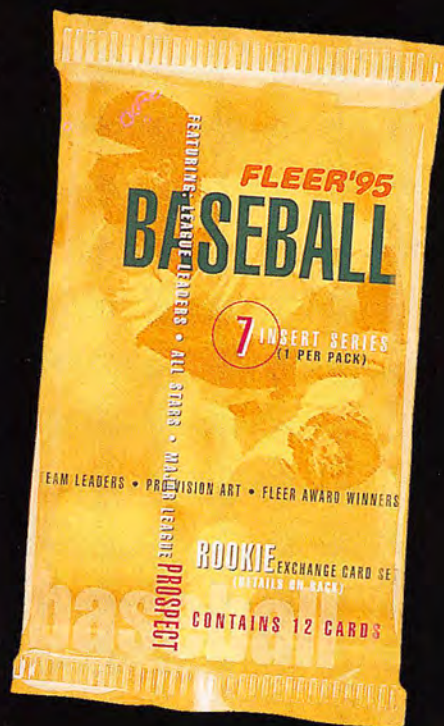
THE BEAST IS BACK

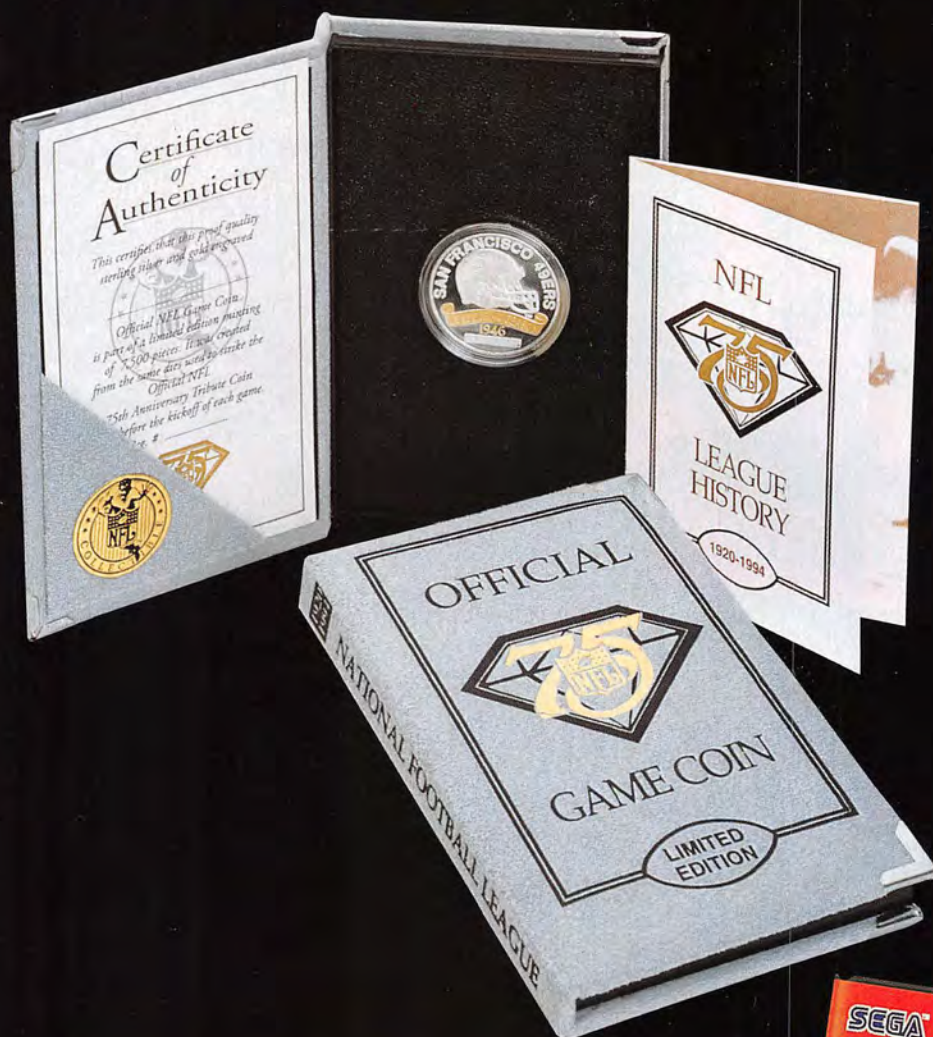
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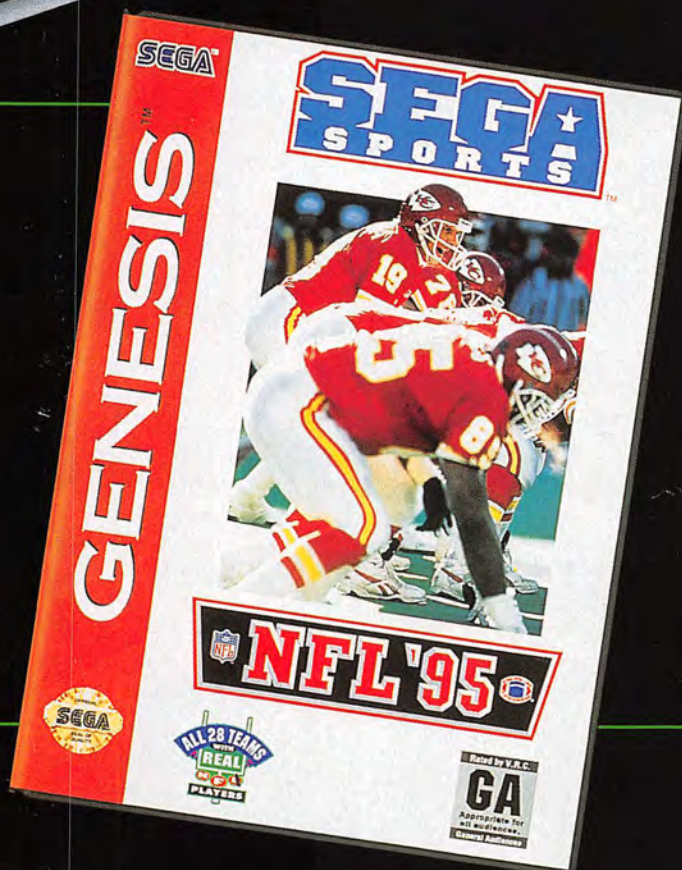
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Requiem for Two heavyweights

Magic Johnson's Lakers and Larry Bird's Celtics dominated the '80s, but life after the legends has been bleak for the NBA's two most celebrated franchises By MARK HEISLER

Under a shade tree on the slopes of Mount Olympus, the great rivalry between Larry Bird and Magic Johnson continues.

LARRY: "I see you guys hired Del Harris to bring back the running game. Who else did you consider—Hank Iba?"

MAGIC: "Loved that Dominique signing. There's a real Celtic for you. The first time he fires up 30 shots on the parquet, I'm looking for all those banners to come down."

LARRY: "How's the Hollywood crowd bearing up? I hear there hasn't been a Rob Lowe sighting since '91."

MAGIC: "At least we made a run at the playoffs last season. When were your guys eliminated, Thanksgiving?"

LARRY: "I liked that coaching stint of yours. Did you tell them you only could stay until your parking meter ran out?"

MAGIC: "Listen to Mr. Involvement. I heard you could've become GM just by saying the word."

LARRY: "You think I'm crazy? I like things the way they are—living in Florida, playing golf, doing some scouting, consulting. Perfect."

MAGIC: "I hear you."

NO, THINGS AREN'T THE SAME for the Boston Celtics and Los Angeles Lakers these days. The rivalry that, more than any other force, built the NBA into a powerhouse league is a memory. The dynasties are dust.

Neither team is at fault. Were it not for the deaths of 1986 Celtics first-round draft pick Len Bias and Boston guard Reggie Lewis, or the medical problems that cut

short the careers of Bird and Magic, the two teams might have dueled into the '90s. Detroit's Bad Boys might have been just a footnote in Eastern Conference history as the aging Celtics and the young Chicago Bulls squared off in epic battles.

That wasn't how it turned out, of course. By the '93-94 season, Bird and Johnson had retired, and the Celtics and Lakers missed the playoffs in the same season for the first time in league history.

Bird and Magic, whose matchup in the 1979 NCAA championship game remains the highest-rated basketball telecast of all time, joined the most glamorous franchises in the NBA's Eastern and Western conferences, respectively, in the '79-80 season. Their personal competition blended with a team rivalry that already was in place. But the clash wasn't just on the hardwood—cities and coasts and basketball styles and lifestyles were set against each other. America picked a favorite and settled in as the drama played out over a decade.

These teams have been down before, but they always rebounded. The Celtics had Red Auerbach, who was so far ahead of everyone else that the pack couldn't sniff his cigar smoke. The Lakers had sunshine, money, and their choice of superstars.

Now they both have a salary cap. NBA moguls might be as nostalgic as anyone for the golden days of the '80s, but league policy has leveled the playing field. Under the current conditions and rules, the Celtics and Lakers have no more resources than the Charlotte Hornets or Orlando Magic—

Look Out Below, Part III

MICHAEL JORDAN? GONE. HORACE Grant? Gone. John Paxson and Bill Cartwright and Scott Williams? Gone. Assistant coach John Bach, spiritual leader of the pit-bull defense? Gone. Chicago Stadium itself? Gone.

In the NBA, you're nobody when somebody leaves you. Like the Boston Celtics after Larry Bird retired and the Los Angeles Lakers after Magic Johnson called it quits, the Bulls dynasty ended the day Jordan said goodbye to basketball.

Of the 12 players on the Chicago Bulls roster when the team won its third title in 1993, nine no longer are with the club. Will Perdue, B.J. Armstrong, and Scottie Pippen are the remaining links to the glory days—and Pippen almost left last summer.

In 1993-94 the team surprised everyone, including coach Phil Jackson, by going 55-27. Only losses to the Celtics and the New York Knicks at home on the last weekend of season kept Chicago from posting the best record in the East and winning home-court advantage through the conference finals. Without that advantage, the Bulls succumbed to the Knicks in the semifinals, losing a hard-fought seventh game in Madison Square Garden.

Now Grant, Williams, and Cartwright are suiting up with other teams, and Paxson has retired. Bulls owner Jerry Reinsdorf, a financial conservative and a leading light in the baseball owners' bomb-the-players-back-to-the-Stone-Age faction, considered Grant and Williams overpriced. Pippen, who became notorious for benching himself with 1.8 seconds left in Game 3 against the Knicks, would have gone the Seattle SuperSonics in exchange for Shawn Kemp—if callers in Seattle hadn't burned up the Sonics switchboard, which persuaded team owner Barry Ackerley to quash the deal.

"As businessmen?" Grant offers of his former employers. "They're No. 1 in the country. As people people? They're terrible."

"They don't know how to treat people as people. Winning covers a multitude of sins. That was what we did over the course of seven years."

The glory days are over. The Bulls may cling to respectability a while longer, but the wheel of fortune is turning—and they're under it. □



Wilkins packs the highlights but hardly fits Boston's tradition of substance over style.

and they have a lot fewer star players.

A case in point: Danny Manning. Both the Celtics and the Lakers had wanted to land the talented forward for years. Manning's agent, Ron Grinker, was an avowed Celtics admirer, and Boston had planned to keep Robert Parish around until Manning became a free agent, so that Danny could take the Chief's salary slot. The Lakers had their own reasons to hope; Manning hated playing for the Clippers, but he liked living in Los Angeles.

In the end, neither team was in the running for Manning when he became a free agent after last season. Manning went to the Phoenix Suns—for a \$2 million cut in pay. The only other team he considered was Charlotte. Tradition might be nice, but recent performance is more to the point when free agents are considering potential employers.

"As recently as 10 or 15 years ago, when you were on a down cycle with the aging process as the Lakers and Celtics are, you could get back and be competitive in a reasonable amount of time," says Celtics great Bob Cousy, who does the team's television broadcasts along with fellow longtime Celtic Tom Heinsohn. "I don't think that's the case anymore. You don't have control over it. It takes an abundance of luck, and as much as 10 or 15 years of finishing near the bottom."

"Even if you finish in the lottery five or

six years in a row, that doesn't guarantee you can turn it around in that period. You have to get years where there are impact players coming out. I think it's going to take a long time for both the Lakers and the Celtics to get back to being competitive."

How about another Celtics-Lakers Finals? "To be honest with you," Cousy says with a laugh, "I doubt if it will happen in my lifetime."

Here's how bad it got last season in Boston: Jackie MacMullan of *The Boston Globe* wrote a column criticizing Celtics Grand Pooh-Bah Dave Gavitt (his actual title was senior executive vice president). Gavitt was so upset he called a news conference to defend himself. When MacMullan was 30 minutes late, Gavitt held up the start. A few months later, Gavitt left the Celtics.

The newspapers began to work over new owner Paul Gaston for dangling coach Chris Ford. Gaston invited reporters to a quiet, off-the-record chat at which he planned to assure everyone there really wasn't a problem. The reporters declined to attend unless the meeting was on the record. Gaston agreed—but the session still didn't convince anyone there was no problem. Instead, Ford confirmed what everyone knew: that he was on thin ice.

These are the Celtics? Through bad times and worse, before Bill Russell arrived and after Bill Russell left, in the '50s and '60s when Boston's champions were playing to 50% capacity in the Garden, in the years when ownership seemed to turn over daily, in the era of Sidney Wicks and John Y. Brown, the Celtics were one man: Auerbach. Churlish though he could

be at any given moment, Auerbach earned respect by building and re-building the dynasty despite meager financial resources and down-the-line draft picks.

All the players who made the Celtics could have gone elsewhere, or did before joining the team. The Rochester Royals and St. Louis Hawks had first crack at Russell in 1956. Auerbach got Dave Cowens with the fourth pick

in the 1970 draft, after Bob Lanier, Rudy Tomjanovich, and Pete Maravich had been taken. Bird—who helped change the face of the game in the '80s—went sixth in 1978, behind Mychal Thompson, Phil Ford,



Auerbach's legacy is tough to match.

Rick Robey, Micheal Ray Richardson, and Purvis Short.

The problem with the recent troubles isn't just that Red wasn't around—Auerbach is 77 and recently recovered from heart surgery. It's that whoever was in charge would have had to pull a rabbit out of a hat again, and rabbits were getting harder to find. It had taken years for the league to catch up to Auerbach, but it happened. In the old days, teams drafted out of the Street & Smith's yearbook, and the lambs lined up to be fleeced by the wily redhead. By the '80s, however, professionalism was seeping into front offices, and secrets were disappearing.

Auerbach tabbed Gavitt as his successor in 1990. Gavitt, the former Big East Conference commissioner, was once the most powerful man in college basketball, but he turned out to be aloof and out of touch in the pros, with no inclination to work the phones as other GMs were doing. On his way out, he took a pounding in the Boston press that, while deserved, only obscured a deeper, darker truth: The decline and fall wasn't his fault. The Celtics need a superstar. Most of those players go in the lottery, sometimes to whoever is lucky enough to win a coin toss.

Auerbach feels better now and is more involved. Gaston would have been pleased

to have Bird succeed Gavitt, but Larry, enjoying retirement, would have none of it. So Gaston hit upon the popular M.L. Carr, who had been in the Celtics' community relations department. M.L. began a whirlwind round of activity, signing archetypal anti-Celtic Dominique Wilkins, plus the fragile Pervis Ellison. Carr also bumbled that he'd trade a No. 1 draft choice just for the right to talk with Michael Jordan. Spirits picked up, and everyone started talking about the playoffs, tra-la, tra-la.

"It's all Band-Aids as far as I can see," says *Globe* columnist Bob Ryan. "So now they win 30 instead of 20 and wind up in Bullets-land forever. If they had trusted the fans, the fans would have understood the big picture. They would have understood that the Celtics have to take a fall. There was no particular demand to get Dominique Wilkins and win 30 games, but ownership doesn't want to accept that."

The rebuilding process is tricky enough when you do everything right; it can be a train wreck when you don't. When Auerbach won his first title, there were just seven other teams in the league. Now there are 26 others, with two more lottery-

clogging expansion teams to come—and Boston is finding out the hard way that what goes around comes around.

"Oh, it's painful for everybody," Cousy says with a laugh, "especially so for Heinsohn and me, since we've got to try to describe it in different ways. We've got the emotional attachment besides. When you see a franchise with the history of the Celtics, and you've been part of their best

days, you try to be a good sport about it. But if we're all honest with ourselves we'd admit it's going to be traumatic. It's already been traumatic.

"We're all losing patience. The fans, the media, the people who have covered the team for years and years—I don't think we're emotionally prepared to deal with five or 10 years of mediocrity. We've been too spoiled."

Get set for a new era: the reality check.



West has seen L.A.'s fortunes go south.

Here's how bad it got last season in Los Angeles: Lakers coach Randy Pfund was fired for failing to boot into playoff contention a bunch of kids who knew he was a lame duck. Team owner Jerry Buss prevailed upon Magic Johnson

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Johnson found it difficult to recapture that Lakers magic from courtside.

to coach the last month, hoping a taste would convince him to stay. The Lakers won five of their first six under Magic, but he already had figured out this wasn't for him.

"Everybody cares about 'I, I, I,'" Johnson said a few weeks later. "'Where are my minutes, where are my shots, what's wrong with my game, why can't I get my game off?' It's a lot of that now, and I don't like that. They wanted that [Lakers tradition] removed from them. They didn't want to deal with that. They call themselves 'the '90s Lakers.'"

When Magic said no thanks to continuing, Buss offered the University of Kentucky's Rick Pitino \$4 million a season to take the job. Pitino turned him down.

Besides hunting for a coach, Lakers general manager Jerry West—like his Celtics counterpart—was looking for a miracle/superstar, too. He eagerly joined the hunt for Manning and another prime free agent, Chicago Bulls power forward Horace Grant. The Lakers had just a \$1.8 million salary slot available, but they also had the loophole afforded by the one-year termination clause, the salary cap-skirting ploy wherein a player signs for much less than he's worth but has the option to become a restricted free agent again after a year, at which point he re-ups with the same team for much more money.

After all, people still want to play in L.A., don't they? Everyone knows Buss pays top dollar, right? A Manning or a Grant could

restore the Lakers to respectability. Get both, and L.A. would be knocking on the door.

The Lakers, of course, got neither. The two preferred teams with the chance to play for a championship now. Manning signed with Phoenix, Grant with the Orlando Magic. One Lakers official noted ruefully, "The loophole was three or four years too late for us."

West keeps pitching, but all he has now are 70-mph fastballs that keep getting blasted back through the box. Three years ago he offered James Worthy to the Hornets for the draft choice that became Larry Johnson. Two years ago he offered Worthy to the Bulls for the pick that became Tom Gugliotta. Last spring he offered Vlade Divac to Detroit for the Grant Hill pick. Everyone said no politely, but no one took a lot of time to do so.

"It's perplexing," West says. "When I heard we weren't going to get Horace Grant, I was, like, in shock."

These are the Lakers? In the old days Los Angeles was basketball heaven. The team arrived in L.A.

from Minneapolis with Elgin Baylor already on board, developed West into a legend, and added Wilt Chamberlain. The Lakers saw that nucleus leave, but two years later they traded for Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, who wanted out of Milwaukee.

Players looked so snazzy in Lakers purple and gold that everyone wanted one of their own. When the New Orleans Jazz signed 33-year-old Lakers free agent Gail Goodrich in 1976, L.A. got a No. 1 draft choice as compensation. That pick turned into Magic Johnson. Cleveland Cavaliers owner Ted Stepien gave a No. 1 pick to the Lakers for Don Ford, notable mainly for his surfer hair. That pick turned into Worthy. Where's Ted Stepien when you need him?

The Lakers clung to the '80s as long as they could. Abdul-Jabbar almost retired in 1984, when he was 37, but stayed for five more seasons—and three more titles. Worthy's wheels were burning out by the early '90s, but he had enough left to help Magic get L.A. to the 1991 Finals. However, Johnson's sudden departure in 1991 after learning he was HIV-positive finished them off; the day he made his announcement, the Lakers as perennial championship contenders were history.

West began the rebuilding process in earnest. No move was too humiliating. The Lakers were hovering around .500 in the '92-93 season when he sent dependable Sam Perkins to Seattle for unproven prospect Doug Christie and sluggish big man Benoit Benjamin.

Buss, however, recoiled at the sight of the Lakers out of contention—and the Forum emptying out. In Boston the sell-outs kept coming, but in L.A. crowds and TV ratings plummeted by 33%. Pfund almost was fired in his first season, only to save his job when the Lakers took the overwhelmingly favored Suns to five games in the first round of the '93 playoffs, then was sent packing last spring.

Pfund knew he was in trouble and had to win, so he played veterans such as Sedale Threatt over prospects such as Christie. Johnson's little boomlet as coach got the Lakers to 33 wins with a team that might have won 23, which would have increased L.A.'s chances of drawing a higher lottery pick. Instead of drafting at No. 4 last spring and having a shot at Hill, the Lakers picked 10th and took a flier on Eddie Jones. West later joked that he was "sitting in Inglewood with 100 two guards."

Johnson, now a part-owner, warns against the trap of the middle of the pack, but there is another problem: These are the Lakers. Like the Celtics, they got to the top and stayed there because they wouldn't accept anything else. They don't know how to tank, even if it might be worthwhile to learn. "We're used to winning, and that's what we want to do," Johnson says. "We can't sit back and say, 'We want to lose just to get into the lottery.' That's not in Jerry West's vocabulary, Dr. Buss' vocabulary, my vocabulary."

L.A.'s plan is to become respectable, then sign a big-ticket free agent or trade for a superstar. In the NBA, however, real superstars such as Michael Jordan, Hakeem Olajuwon, David Robinson, and Patrick Ewing—as opposed to the Mannings and Grants—rarely come on the market. The Lakers have their work cut out for them.

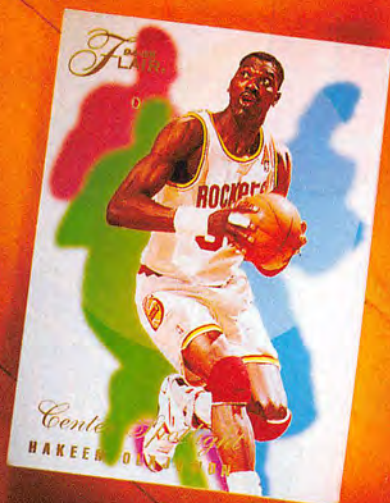
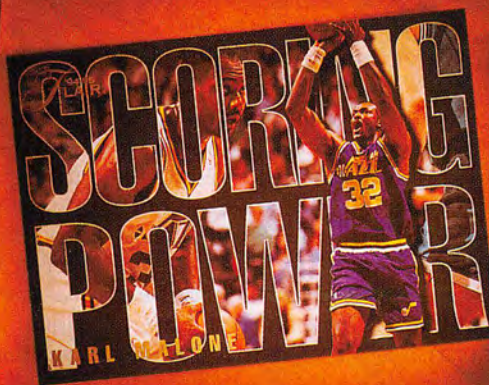
"We've acquired Cedric Ceballos, who we think is a real good player," West says. "We have high hopes for Jones. We had two very good rookies last year, Nick Van Exel and George Lynch. We think we're going to have tremendous depth, which may give us an opportunity to go to teams and say, 'Look, we'll give two or three of our younger players for this player here because maybe the player is unhappy.'"

Next summer the Lakers will have Sam Bowie's \$3.2 million slot open. The summer after that, Johnson and Worthy go off the cap, and the Lakers may be able to get under it.

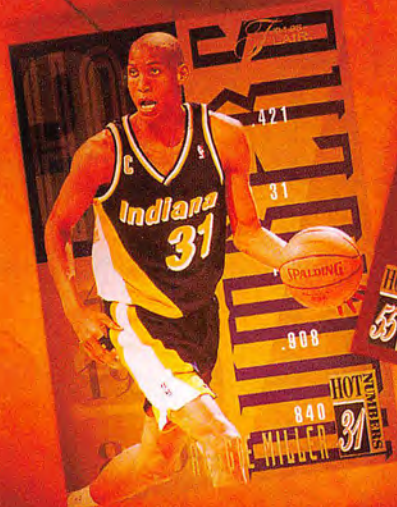
Of course, players still are aching to play in L.A., aren't they? Aren't they? ■

Contributing writer MARK HEISLER answered 48 hot questions about the NBA in the December issue of INSIDE SPORTS.

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THE NHL HAS FRANCHISES IN 10 of the top 11 U.S. markets, a reigning Stanley Cup champion in New York, a television contract with Fox, and a stronger-than-ever presence on ESPN.

But the best indication that the NHL finally has climbed into the sports elite is that it succeeded in shutting itself down, just like other leagues whose popularity it long has coveted.

In March 1977 the struggling Cleveland Barons had no money to pay their players, and the club would have folded if not for a \$600,000 cash infusion from the NHL Players Association to help finance it through the end of the '76-77 season. These days the head of the same union publicly questions why his players should have to sacrifice financially to preserve the small markets the NHL absorbed in its 1979 merger with the World Hockey Association.

The long-awaited golden egg has been laid, but it quickly cracked. The players, beneficiaries of a system that provided

them little freedom but a whopping 61% of the gross, were anxious to postpone the war indefinitely, but the commissioner was ready to fight. In shutting down the NHL at the start of the season, Gary Bettman risked squandering the marketing opportunity created by the New York Rangers' magical slaying of their 54-year-old Stanley Cup dragon, risked alienating fans who had been jamming the arenas of the league's new Sun Belt cities, risked losing the mighty cash stream created by the sale of Anaheim Mighty Ducks jerseys.

However, the owners also had the hammer: air-conditioned rinks that would allow the playoffs to continue into July if necessary. So there would have been little sense in Bettman delaying a confrontation, and with peace there will be no holding back the explosion of a sport better run, more skillfully played, and more deftly marketed than ever before.

The 1994-95 season may take a while, but it will come off, resolving these questions that ever-increasing numbers of inquiring hockey minds are asking:

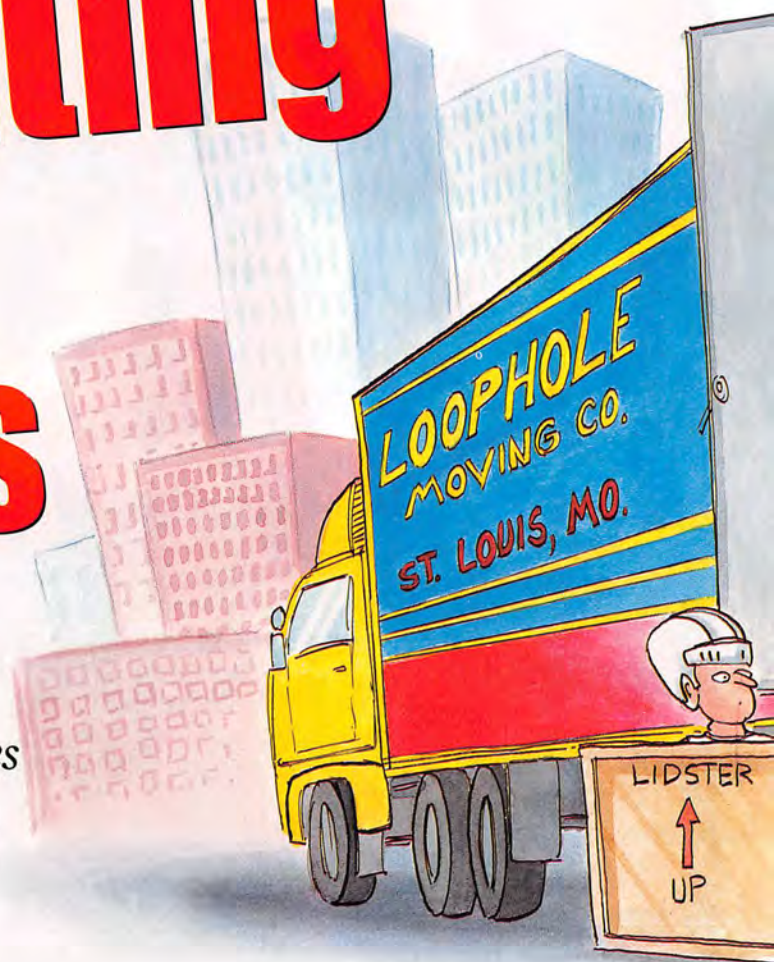
The Keenan Caper

Can the Rangers repeat? Sorry, Blueshirts fans: one Stanley Cup per lifetime. Sure, Brian Leetch, Alexei Kovalev, Adam Graves, Mike Richter, and Sergei Zubov are either in their prime or approaching them, but Mark Messier and Kevin Lowe have more miles on them than Mike Keenan's U-Haul. New coach Colin Campbell is in a tough spot, having to earn the respect of Messier when the proud, aging star's ice time may have to be cut to preserve him for the playoffs. Superb checker and pest extraordinaire Esa Tikkanen, sent to St. Louis as part of the Keenan settlement, will be missed, and the defense, short a man last season, will be minus two if the increasingly infirm Lowe can't play 50 games.

What happened with Keenan anyway? General manager Neil Smith accurately concluded that Madison Square Garden wasn't big enough for the both of them, and thus he told Keenan to find a way to take a hike. In the struggle for

No Skating Around the Issues

Which way is hockey headed? Is Gary Bettman a tyrant? What's with Mike Keenan? The NHL faces plenty of hot questions this season, and we've got (nearly) all the answers By JAY GREENBERG



power, Smith gained support for himself within the Viacom hierarchy. Because of the Garden's imminent sale, Keenan ally and MSG president Bob Gutkowski couldn't guarantee his own survival, let alone his coach's, and he was under instructions not to let Keenan out of his contract. So Keenan, knowing his market value was at an all-time high, used the loophole of a bonus check that came a day late to leap from an untenable situation.

Gutkowski earlier had entertained thoughts of replacing the GM, but he knew Smith was on the power play and had to pretend to be unified with him in expressing outrage toward Keenan so that the St. Louis Blues, who signed Keenan 48 hours

later, would give the Rangers compensation. When commissioner Bettman called a hearing, Keenan's brief was far from brief, as he recounted the whole sordid story. But Bettman, taking the view that he should be the final arbiter in contract disputes, fined Keenan and suspended him for 60 days.

So who won? In PR terms, Smith because he managed to make Keenan, known to be a hard man to get along with, look like the bad guy. But Keenan also won because he landed on his feet for twice the money and with authority on trades that he didn't have in New York.

Then who lost? Keenan, who under the terms of the trade and settlement that nervous Blues officials agreed to against his wishes cannot tell his entire side of the story. But Smith lost, too—first, because he drove away an excellent coach, and second, because the Rangers didn't do as well in the exchange with St. Louis as they seemed to at first. For all his obvious promise, 23-year-old Petr Nedved is more timid in traffic than the Blues were about moving him. The now-departed Tikkanen

is an irreplaceable role player, and Doug Lidster, who also went to St. Louis, remains a useful defenseman. Additionally, the Blues say Smith promised them another deal later.

Will Keenan succeed in St. Louis? If he doesn't, it would be the first place he didn't. The Blues earned 91 points last season even with superstar right winger Brett Hull playing indifferently. Now they've added one of the league's best defensemen, Al MacInnis, to a roster that includes Hull, the game's purest scorer, and Curtis Joseph, one of its best goalies. Of course, there will be some casualties as Keenan goes through his obligatory attitudinal readjustments. If softies Steve Duchesne and Craig Janney are still Blues three months after the games begin, it will be an upset.

Then why would Hull, not exactly known as a workaholic, survive? Because Keenan understands that elite talent is scarce. If Hull shows a willingness to take some punishment to score goals, and if he turns around to look for his man, oh,

However you score the Keenan-vs.-New York tilt, you have to admit the coach took a few Rangers for a ride.



every third shift or so, he and Keenan will do just fine.

So the Blues are going to win the Cup? Right—in 1996, maybe 1997. Keenan will figure out what he still needs—size and grit—in about five minutes, but it's probably going to take a year or so to acquire it.

Sizing Up the Contenders

Who is going to win this season? Detroit. The Red Wings have the NHL's best all-around player in Sergei Fedorov, which makes Steve Yzerman either the world's greatest second-line center or an eminently tradable commodity for the winger and/or defenseman Detroit needs. The goaltending problem that shot down the Red Wings in the first round the last two seasons has been solved with the trade for Mike Vernon, who took the Flames all the way in 1989. Vyacheslav Kozlov and Keith Primeau are emerging monster talents, and though coach Scott Bowman is getting more eccentric than ever in his old age, he remains a master button-pusher in playoff situations.

And if something goes wrong for the Red Wings again? A number of teams also are only a trade away from a possible Cup. In the playoffs last season, the Buffalo Sabres, minus Pat LaFontaine, lost 2-1 in a seventh game to the New Jersey Devils—which didn't look so impressive until New Jersey fell 2-1 in a seventh game to the Rangers. Buffalo was without LaFontaine for 68 games and Craig Simpson for 62, and still accrued 95 points. The Sabres are well coached by John Muckler and well goaltended by Dominik Hasek, which indicates that if the key players stay healthy, Buffalo might be the team that comes out of the Eastern Conference.

What do the Sabres still need? An offensive defenseman.

Who are some other teams that are in this one-trade-away category?

The Vancouver Canucks and the Toronto Maple Leafs.

And they need...?

Defensemen, too. Despite a six-man rotation that included Brian Glynn and Dave Babych, the Canucks still came within one Mike Richter glove save of going to overtime in Game 7 of the '94 Cup Finals. Still, we wouldn't recommend them trying again with the same team. For their part, the Leafs made a smart trade to get talented center Mats Sundin from the Quebec Nordiques, as the stalwart Doug Gilmour isn't getting any younger. Toronto shed a few tears when hero Wendel Clark went to Quebec in the exchange, but the larger

Leafs sacrifice might have been the solid Sylvain Lefebvre, especially considering the free agency loss of Bob Rouse to the Red Wings.

It seems as if everyone needs defense, which must mean there isn't enough to go around. Isn't anybody set back there? On the contrary. New Jersey has a strong blue-line corps, and the Devils will be better than ever if Scott Niedermayer develops into the superior player he's expected to be. The Dallas Stars ran up 97 points and swept St. Louis in the playoffs even without their best defenseman, Mark Tinordi, who is back. For a longer shot, consider the New York Islanders. They appeared to have about as much left as postwar Hiroshima after a first-round sweep by the Rangers last spring, but a talented young defense could develop into a topnotch unit if Darius Kasparaitis keeps his promise to himself to tone things down off the ice, and if Vladimir Malakhov and Scott Lachance play up to capabilities.

What do those teams need? The Islanders ditched veteran goalie Ron Hextall to go with two kids with short track records, Jamie McLennan and Tommy Soderstrom. The Devils were thin at center even before they failed to re-sign Bernie Nicholls, so it's hard to see them

generating enough offense to win it all.

Any other darkhorses? Quebec—except the Nordiques are more like a speed horse than a 6-to-1 shot. The addition of Peter Forsberg, the key acquisition in the Eric Lindros trade, means the very talented Sundin won't be missed at all. Lefebvre and Clark add needed grit, and a coaching change from intractable and excitable Pierre Page to successful AHLer Marc Crawford can't hurt. Now the Nordiques need an offensive defenseman, and for goalie Stephane Fiset to mature.

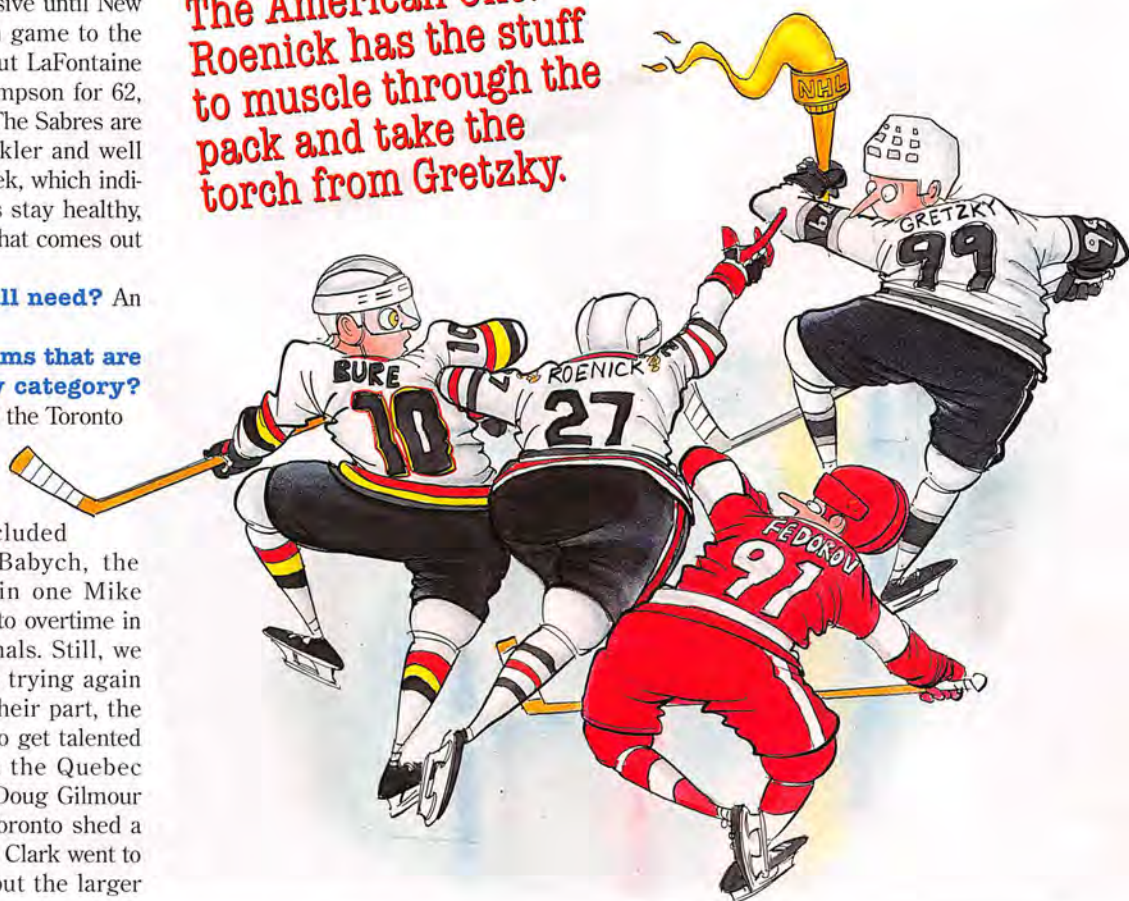
You have to count out the Pittsburgh Penguins without Mario Lemieux, right? That's if you count out Lemieux. Some thought he was announcing his shutdown for the season to take himself off any deadline while still privately reserving the right to come back if he got a February itch. But the inside view in Pittsburgh is Lemieux not only won't play this season, but might never play again.

Do you believe that? Not really, but we once thought Michael Jordan wouldn't be gone from basketball too long, either.

Does it look as if the Montreal Canadiens, who lost in the first round last spring, will bounce back before Lemieux does? With Montreal's offense, bet on Mario.

Cam Neely is limping, Ray Bourque

**The American One:
Roenick has the stuff
to muscle through the
pack and take the
torch from Gretzky.**



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is aging, and nobody you ever heard of is the Boston Bruins goalie, so could this be the first spring in 28 years that the Bruins miss the playoffs? Absolutely and unequivocally yes. And if not this season, then next, for sure. Unless it happens the following year. In any case, it has been clear to us forever that the Bruins can't go on forever.

Passing the Torch

Speaking of being on the far side of the hill, does Wayne Gretzky's 1993-94 scoring title figure to be his last?

Well, Gretzky's hill has a gentler slope than most, but yeah, probably. Fedorov, who finished just 10 points behind the Great One last year, gets better every year.

Is Fedorov the guy the league is hanging its hat tricks on as Gretzky and Lemieux inevitably become yesterday's news? That's going to be tough. Fedorov is a marvelous player but is no cola-selling phenomenon waiting to be discovered. He's from Russia, and he's not exactly as bubbly as Charles Barkley.

Then who takes the mantle from Gretzky? That could be a problem. Gilmour is no spring chicken, and he plays for a Canadian franchise—albeit the most popular one. Pavel Bure's home games start at 10:30 p.m. EST, and he looks like a deer caught in the headlights when the dreaded tape recorder or notepad appears. Hull has a whiny side and a loose cannon for a mouth. The NHL's best untapped resource might be Jeremy Roenick of the Chicago Blackhawks. The Boston native plays in a big market, is skilled and driven enough to win a scoring title, and has the personality to take advantage of his success, big-time.

But only until Eric Lindros takes over, right? The world is Big Eric's oyster, but his instinct remains to clam up. He's been under the microscope for a long time and sometimes seems weary of the burden. Lindros has to start enjoying himself, which will happen only when the Flyers assemble enough good players around him to begin to see a return on their huge investment in him.

How long will that take? To be a playoff team, not long at all. The Flyers fell four points short last season, when Lindros missed 19 games. They're a goalie and two defensemen shy of real contention.

You're saying that there is no clear "next Wayne Gretzky"? It's been clear for a long time there is only one Gretzky.

Will that stunt the league's growth?

With new West Coast franchises up and running in San Jose and Anaheim, the Great One's seed work is largely completed. But, of course, superstars mean television ratings, and by definition, there never are enough great players to go around. That's why any team that could afford Lindros couldn't afford not to go after him.

Growing Pains

Why are the new NHL teams selling so many more tickets than expansion teams did in late '60s and early '70s? Marketing, mostly. Colorful jerseys and boffo logos go a lot further than they

Clutch play: The newcomers' strategy has been to market their own shirts and grab tight on their foes'.



did 25 years ago. The quality of play necessarily goes down with any expansion, but the visibility of the league is way up.

Just how much has the quality of play slipped? There are more good players now than ever before, but they're spread around to more teams. That's an inevitable part of any expansion, despite what the league tells you about Europeans filling the talent gaps. If Tim Watters still has a job, the level of competition can't be what the league pretends it is.

The Sharks, Florida Panthers, and Tampa Bay Lightning all won 30 or more games last season, and of the five recent expansion teams, only

the Ottawa Senators failed to win at least 20. How do all these clubs play so respectably if they don't have any players? They have goaltending and coaching, which today goes a lot further than it should.

What do you have against good goaltending and coaching? In the general scheme of things they keep the scores down and promote conservative play.

How can you knock a team for getting the most out of what it has? You can't, of course. The Sharks' Kevin Constantine, the Ducks' Ron Wilson, the Lightning's Terry Crisp, and the Panthers' Roger Neilson all coach organized, moti-

vated clubs that are turning the natives into real hockey fans. You don't see many 9-2 games, and that's good. Then again, some 2-1 games are worse than 9-2 games.

How can you say that? The words don't exactly roll off our tongue in mid-yawn, but the problem is that there's little redress against these new designer-dressed clubs. They dump the puck and clutch and grab all night—severe annoyances to erudite puckheads in established hockey cities. Forward passing has been allowed in all zones of the NHL since 1928, but you wouldn't know it when you watch the majority of regular-season games. Fortunately, the level of play improves dramatically in the postseason because better clubs have the wherewithal to go after one another, and do. But too many tortoises chasing down a dwindling number of hares is putting us to sleep during January and February.

What should the NHL do about it? That's a tough one. The knee-jerk answer is to enforce restraining fouls more strongly,

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something the NHL annually announces it's doing, to no permanent effect. The party line is that the players adjust and clean up their act, but it's actually the officials who readjust to the way things always have been. They get tired of whistling the game to a virtual stop and having everyone screaming at them, so enforcement slacks off in anticipation of the next directive from the league on the latest penalty-of-the-month.

Who's to blame: the officials or the league? Neither. Unless the NHL goes to two referees, which probably would increase the number of whistles, hockey essentially is an impossible sport to officiate correctly: There simply is too much going on out there. The best referees are vigilant about the chippy stuff and call restraining fouls only when they directly affect scoring chances. If they whistled all the interference they see, the games would consist only of faceoffs. You have to allow a referee to be comfortable with his judgment. Otherwise he projects no confidence and loses his feel for the game.

Wouldn't better guidance from the league lead to standardization of calls and a better-officiated product? This season the refs will see tapes and regularly receive more instruction.

That can't hurt. Neither, ultimately, can the substantial salary increase the officials received last season. Now a promising amateur official won't need a wife with a good job before he can consider entering the trainee program and beginning the long climb up the ladder. The job will become more attractive, and the level of officiating should rise.

Is it that bad now? Having said all the above, no, it isn't. Officiating is so subjective that players, coaches, and fans always are going to complain about it.

If the officiating isn't in crisis and labor peace has been achieved, what are the biggest problems Bettman faces? The state of the Edmonton Oilers and Hartford Whalers. The Oilers have been run into the ground by owner Peter Pocklington's cash-flow problems. It's doubtful they're going to get enough relief from the collective bargaining agreement

to keep their better players and begin to compete again. Hartford at least has new ownership and a future Norris Trophy winner in Chris Pronger, but the Whalers can't score, and attendance is horrendous. The team gave up three No. 1 draft choices to sign defenseman Glen Wesley, who hardly is a star, and that's no way to build.

Aren't the Winnipeg Jets in the same boat? No, because the Jets have 24-year-old Teemu Selanne, who scored 76 goals two seasons ago, plus a new general manager, John Paddock, who is intent on changing the chemistry of an overly Europeanized team.

Isn't it bigoted to suggest that



There has been talk of new arenas in Quebec, Buffalo, Ottawa, Miami, Tampa, Dallas, Winnipeg, and Los Angeles. If those come to pass, in the next decade more than half the NHL teams could be playing in new venues. Those arenas could have been built to accommodate a larger playing surface.

But isn't international hockey passionless because of the lack of contact on the larger ice surface? Yes, so we wouldn't have gone as far as 100-foot widths, only to 90 or 92—just enough to put more outside speed into the game and take more clutchers and grabbers out of it. That would have brought relief to knees and backs, and to stressed-out officials.

But it's too late now.

Will an NHL team ever be back in Minnesota? It's inevitable. Minneapolis' Target Center badly needs another tenant, and some franchise is going to be looking for a new home soon. Absence will make Minnesota hearts grow fonder for the

Designers of the new rinks missed a chance to loosen things up and give the boys more room to skate.

Winnipeg hasn't been able to win because it has too many European players? Yes. It's despicable that Thomas Steen, the Jets' Swedish-born center, says his team has had too many Europeans.

Should we cry big Zamboni tears that we shall never see Chicago Stadium and St. Louis Arena again, and remain ever mournful that the old barns in Montreal, Boston, Vancouver, and Philadelphia may soon outlive their usefulness? Yes, weep away, and not just because we're getting nostalgic about crowded corridors, narrow seats, and long lines for the bathroom. The new arenas, gleaming and revenue-producing though they might be, reflect a lack of foresight by the league. The players have become too big and fast to play in a 200-foot-by-85-foot rink anymore. Routine collisions are putting too many gate attractions into street clothes.

NHL, and a team will thrive with a fresh start there.

Little Big Man

Was Chris Chelios serious when he suggested somebody might do away with Bettman to solve the NHL's labor woes? Or had the Blackhawks defenseman just watched "Goodfellas" too many times? Neither. Chelios has been playing hockey a long time, that's all.

Is Bettman as heavy-handed, Machiavellian, condescending, and worshipful of the bottom line as he seems? Yes.

As an American who prepared himself to run the NHL by serving as NBA senior vice president and general counsel, can Bettman tell the difference between Jeff Brown and

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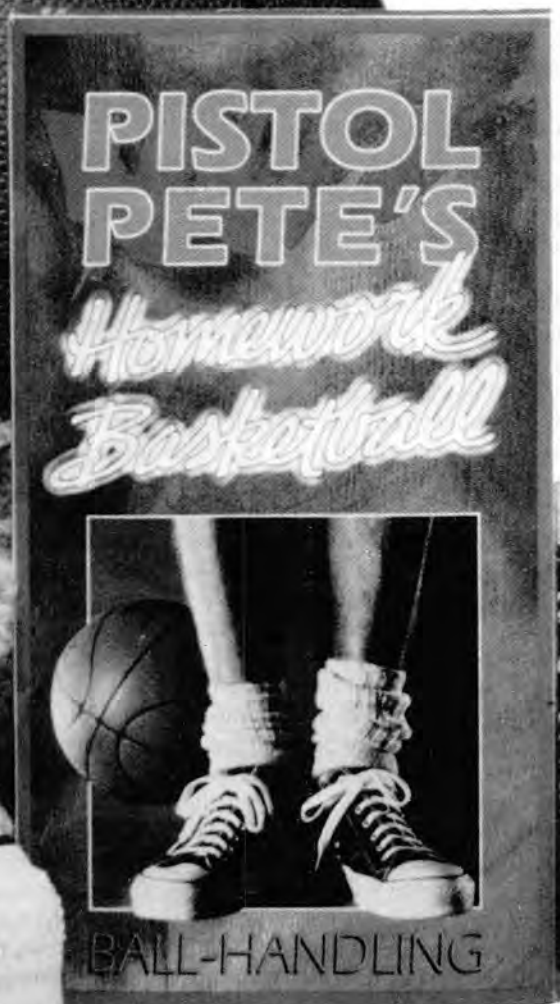
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**"Yo, pally—
'member all dat stuff
dat guy Chelios said?
Well, I, uh, he din't
mean nuttin' by it, OK?"**

Dave Brown? Not even if he had just seen the two take back-to-back penalty shots.

So the players are right when they say Bettman is a clueless, power-tripping punk out to punish them for no reason other than his own gratification? No. Whoever the owners picked for commissioner would be obligated to fight the same fight. Bettman's job is to keep the franchises in Edmonton, Calgary, Quebec, Winnipeg, Ottawa, Pittsburgh, and Hartford in business so that cities such as Houston, Atlanta, Phoenix, Minneapolis, and Seattle can bring the league \$75 million each in expansion fees. If the players were as much of a union as they claim to be, they would look at things similarly. They'd want not just more money, but more jobs.

Issues, Etc.

Is the NHL ever going to get rid of fighting? The strongest-ever push by doves within the sport was repelled a year

ago, and there hasn't been any groundswell since.

Should it still be an issue? Fighting always has been a larger image concern than it is an actual hazard. For the number of fans fighting brings in, the league spends too much time and effort defending and policing it.

To be fair, fighting does in some cases keep sticks on the ice instead of in groins. But most goon-vs.-goon fights have as much effect on play as a brawl in the stands, and most of the punch-ups are as stupid as they are boring—something the producers for the 11 o'clock news haven't caught on to yet.

Speaking of television, how big a coup for Bettman is the NHL's five-year, \$155 million deal with Fox?

The take comes to a little more than \$1 million per team per year, which nowadays buys you one second-line left wing. Still, this is the first time since 1974-75 that a major network has found hockey to be a worthwhile buy, so the Fox deal signals that the NHL finally has acquired a national presence. The emergence of a well-funded fourth network run by Australians perhaps not fully attuned to hockey's dismal history on television certainly didn't hurt the NHL's bargaining position. Neither did the interest of another network that just lost the NFL and has only the NCAA Tournament and "Rescue 911" remaining.

The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

What coaches are most likely to be missing from Fox broadcasts, or any hockey shows for that matter, by the end of the season? Jacques Demers, only one year removed from the Cup, may be removed from the Canadiens bench for the simple reason that Montreal's populace always overrates the team's talent. Demers might be racing Penguins coach Eddie Johnston to the firing line, because Pittsburgh isn't so strong anymore that the team can run itself. The Los Angeles Kings' Barry Melrose, who last season suffered the hard realization that he didn't invent the game, has new owners, a new general manager, and hopefully a new appreciation of his vulnerability. Chicago's Darryl Sutter will get a chance to lose in the first round for the third straight season before he goes the way of all coaches.

Who is certain to be one of the first coaches hired? Mike Milbury, one of the game's great self-promoters, is perfectly situated now in the ESPN studio.

Who will be the NHL's rookie of the year? Quebec's Forsberg.

Who will be runner-up? Paul Kariya of Anaheim.

Who is the best goalie? For year-in, year-out consistency, Montreal's Patrick Roy is in his own zone. Richter, Tom Barrasso, Grant Fuhr, Bill Ranford, and Mike Vernon are good enough to have backstopped Stanley Cup winners, and Toronto's Felix Potvin is plenty good enough to win someday. Let's go around the block a few more times with Hasek, Joseph, and New Jersey's Martin Brodeur before we anoint them.

How do the Washington Capitals manage to remain so colorless, odorless, and tasteless year after year?

In this league, you can become a victim of your own competence—penalized by a low draft position so that you never get anyone more exciting than Dmitri Khristich. Then again, you have to spend money and take chances to break through. The Caps remain the personification of their laconic owner, Abe Pollin, and their competent and conservative GM, David Poile.

Who are the really smart operators in the league? John Muckler of Buffalo knows what he wants and last season showed he was smart enough to coach exactly what he has. Keenan, during a previous reincarnation as a GM in Chicago, pil-

ferred Chelios and a second-round draft pick for fast-fading Denis Savard. Cliff Fletcher built a Cup winner in Calgary and then within two years turned around the Maple Leafs, long the worst-run franchise in sports. Craig Patrick won two Stanley Cups in Pittsburgh, and while running the Rangers he drafted Brian Leetch and Mike Richter. Pat Quinn has picked St. Louis' pocket consistently to make the Canucks, historically only slightly less laughable than the Leafs, a winner.

Who are the guys who are getting smarter all the time? Dallas' Bob Gainey exudes dignity, purposefulness, and intelligence. New Jersey coach Jacques Lemaire did a remarkable job with much the same team U.S. Olympic miracle-worker Herb Brooks couldn't move off the .500 dime. Don't laugh, but Ottawa's Rick Bowness is a smart guy working for guys who are at least smart enough to see that it's not his fault.

Who used to be among the smartest? Neil Smith, until he drove Keenan away. Glen Sather, until the Oilers were sunk by the sheer weight of Pocklington's money problems and a not-very-spiffy drafting record. Montreal's Serge Savard, until he traded Chelios.

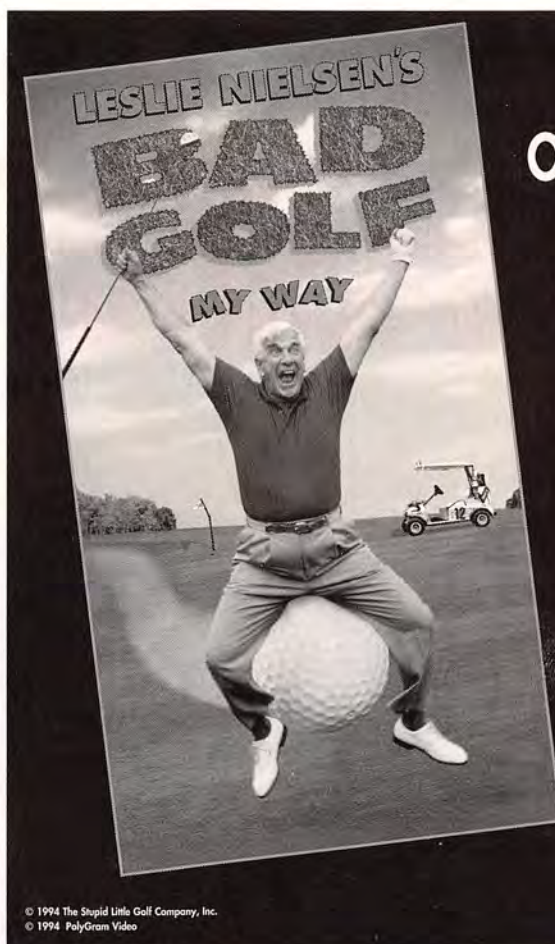
Is Keenan the NHL's best coach, hands down? He and Toronto's Pat Burns are Nos. 1 and 1a. Gainey and Lemaire, who are less contentious than Keenan and Burns, and may have longer shelf lives as a result, are Nos. 2 and 2a. Some of the expansion guys are doing a lot with a little, but let's see them take a team with talent and expectations for a long playoff ride or two before we clear space in the Hall of Fame.

Who got the best of the Rick Tocchet-for-Luc Robitaille deal, the most intriguing trade of the off-season? In the short run, Los Angeles, which picked up Tocchet from Pittsburgh for Robitaille. Tocchet does more things to help you win than just score goals. But Robitaille is two years younger, doesn't have a bad back, and is automatic for 40 to 50 goals for at least the next five years.

Why is Ottawa so awful? The Senators don't have one defenseman who would be even a No. 4 man on a playoff team.

Why has Calgary, which has averaged 40 victories a season since winning the Cup in 1989, not been able to win a single playoff series in that time? What, do you think we know everything? ■

JAY GREENBERG has been following the NHL since 1974. Some Canadian puckheads refer to him as the best hockey writer south of their border.



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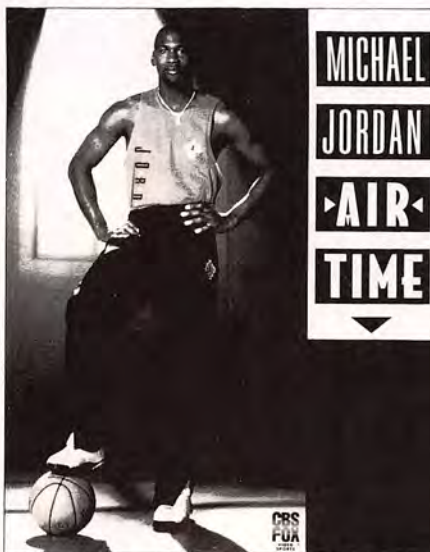
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There He Is, Mr. Heisman Hype...

By JOHN FEINSTEIN

The selection of college football's best player used to be a momentous, even magical, process; now it's a phony and bombastic publicity parade

LET'S FACE IT: BEAUTY contests aren't what they used to be. When we were kids, the Miss America pageant was about as glitzy and glamorous as anything that happened all year. To be able to stay up late and hear Bert Parks warble "There she is..." as the tearful beauty waved to her loyal followers and admirers—well, it just didn't get much better than that.

There was nothing like the Heisman Trophy, either. To win a Heisman Trophy was to be guaranteed football immortality. It really didn't matter how your professional career turned out. After all, Doc Blanchard and Glenn Davis won the award in back-to-back years for Army in 1945 and '46, and Dick Kazmaier won it playing for Princeton—Princeton!—in 1951. Other Heisman winners included Pete Dawkins, a war hero; Ernie Davis, a tragic hero; and Jim Plunkett, who overcame adversity that ran from here to eternity.

That isn't to say great players never won the Heisman. Tom Harmon won it, and so did Roger Staubach and O.J. Simpson. Tony Dorsett and Earl Campbell won in back-to-



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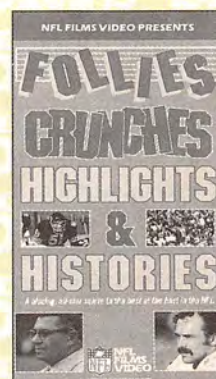


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back years, and Marcus Allen took it a few years later. But it wasn't what happened in the pros that mattered (only six Heisman winners are in the Pro Football Hall of Fame) or even how many games your team won in your Heisman season—Notre Dame was 2-8 the year Paul Hornung won. What mattered was that a Heisman winner was not only *someone* special, but *something* special. A Heisman winner had a mystique about him; it was almost as if that famous trophy with the running back holding his arm outstretched was designed to keep people from getting too close to the winner, lest they learn too much.

Today, though, Bert Parks is dead, and the Miss America pageant might as well be. Regis and Kathie Lee? Are you kidding? Who knows—maybe next year they'll host the Heisman TV show.

Of course the TV show is a major part of the problem. The Heisman isn't so much an award anymore as a made-for-TV event, a show that drags out 30 seconds' worth of information for 30 minutes. Inevitably, everyone knows who the winner is long before the telecast starts—in 1993 Charlie Ward's victory was assured about three months before the season started—and it's pointless to drag on with all the silly interviews and the hyped features, and all the thanking of mothers and fathers and grandmothers and grandfathers and forebears and coaches and teammates and sisters and cousins and aunts...

You get the picture. The winner of the Heisman Trophy shouldn't be squirming uncomfortably in a suit. He should be a legend posing with his arms wrapped around the trophy. He should be someone who, like Doug Flutie, wins the award by throwing a Hail Mary pass 60 yards into the Miami endzone to win an unwinnable game; someone who, like Billy Cannon, runs back a punt for a touchdown on Halloween night with all of America watching.

He should not be the player whose sports information office had the biggest budget to spend on life-size posters or on postcards sent by overnight mail to update Joe Heisman's statistics. He should not win on the strength of one great game on national TV or because Notre Dame has the greatest publicity operation in the history of this nation.

Somewhere amid all the posturing and hype that has overrun the award in the last 10 to 15 years, the approximately 800 media members who receive ballots each

year have lost their way. No one ever has said the Heisman winner should be the best NFL prospect. That's not what the award is supposed to be. However, consider this: Since 1982, when Herschel Walker earned the award, only one Heisman winner—Barry Sanders, who won in '89—has made an impact in the NFL.

Since then you're talking about Mike Rozier and Vinny Testaverde and Tim Brown and Andre Ware and Ty Detmer and—where have you gone, Bert Parks?—Gino Torretta. It's unfair to include Flutie in that group because everyone knew he was too small for the NFL, but he deserved the award because in 1984 he was an extraordinary college quarterback. Bo Jackson is exempt, too, because we'll never know how good he might have been in the NFL.

Heisman winners who don't pan out in the pros are not a new phenomenon. And to repeat: NFL success should not be a barometer for whether a Heisman winner



The question, then, is, can the Heisman be saved? The answer is a definite maybe.

deserved the award. But only one NFL impact player in 11 years? Toretta wasn't even in the league at last glance, and Ward is suiting up for the New York Knicks. The Knicks, if you recall, play basketball.

The question, then, is, can the Heisman be saved? The answer is a definite maybe.

First, the TV show has to go. It's embarrassing schlock, and it demystifies the winner before he even accepts the trophy. Second, even though there will be screaming and yelling in newsrooms across the nation, all media members should be stripped of their votes. In general, print and broadcast journalists don't see enough games, have incurable biases of some kind, and are influenced much too heavily by gaudy statistics and television.

For instance, it's noble for a magazine to put Alcorn State quarterback Steve McNair on its cover in September and demand he be awarded the Heisman. It makes the point that the Heisman winner shouldn't have to come from Notre Dame or Michigan or Miami or Florida State. However, bestowing the trophy on *anyone* in September makes no sense.

The Heisman Trophy should be decided

by a rotating panel of five former winners of the award. Their identities should be kept secret until the day the winner is announced so they won't be bombarded with hype and stats and posters—not to mention freebies of every kind. They should be told that in selecting a winner, they will either enhance or drag down the prestige of the award they themselves previously won. Make certain they go to as many games as they need to and supply them with a satellite dish so they can see as many games as possible.

Do not let them anywhere near Beano Cook unless you want Notre Dame quarterback Ron Powlus to win the award for the next 10 years. (Beano still will be voting for Powlus when he's in the NFL.) Do not let them talk to Lou Holtz because that will guarantee an 11-way tie among the 11 quarterbacks Notre Dame will face that season.

Be honest about the award: Specify that it is for offensive skill-position players only. No lineman is going to win, and there are separate awards now for them and for defensive players, anyway.

Change the voting panel each year. Allow voters to pull the duty more than once, but don't fall into a pattern that can be figured out. Announce the winner at halftime of the Army-Navy game, because more people should watch that game, and because Heisman winners such as Blanchard and Davis, Dawkins and Staubach, and even Joe Bellino helped make the award what it was when it truly was something. Let one of the former winners on the selection panel begin halftime by making the announcement, and let that be it—no interview by satellite, no extended thanks.

The Heisman Trophy is like anything else in sports: If it's allowed to run amok, eventually it will kill itself. Ask the major league baseball owners or anyone who has had to work with a professional tennis player. Sometimes a step backward can be a step forward. The Heisman should be simplified and de-hyped. Any player whose sports information director sends out a special hype package automatically should be disqualified from the race, and the SID should be forced to listen to four hours of Holtz talking about why he's scared to death of Navy.

Even in the '90s, smaller can be better. No one ever made a life-size poster of John Heisman. He never once played on TV. His award deserves to be given back its dignity.

After all, if things keep going in their current direction, it won't be long before we turn on our TVs on a December Saturday and find Regis and Kathie Lee singing, "There he is, he won the He-is-man..." ■

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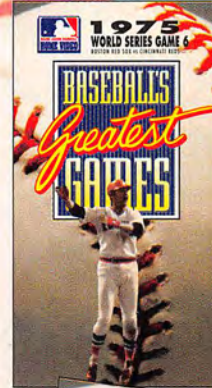
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1952 World Series Game 6

94 minutes, B&W

New York Yankees/
Brooklyn Dodgers

Two home runs by Brooklyn's Duke Snider and solo blasts by Yankees Mickey Mantle and Yogi Berra were overshadowed by a memorable mishap: Dodgers pitcher Billy Loes lost a ground ball in the sun, and it proved to be a pivotal play in a tense 3-2 Yankees victory that tied the Series at three wins apiece. Item #302.



1975 World Series Game 6

95 minutes, Color

Boston Red Sox/Cincinnati Reds

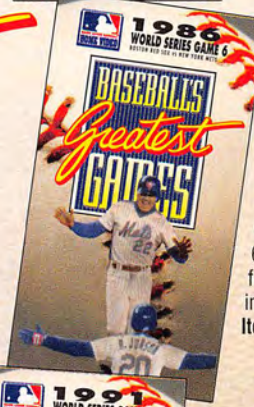
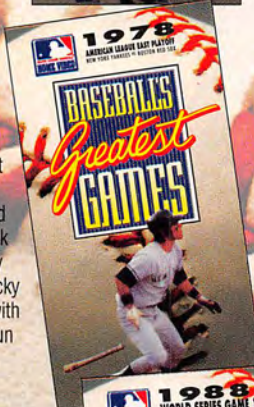
Regarded by many as the greatest game in World Series history, it kept a national television audience on the edge of its seat. The 12-inning melodrama featured rallies, great plays, and heroic performances. Boston's Carlton Fisk hit a 12th-inning game-winning home run, that stunned the Reds, and tied the Series at three wins each. Item #300.

1978 American League East Playoff

91 minutes, Color

New York Yankees/Boston Red Sox

The only thing you could predict in this one-game playoff was that the outcome would go down to the wire. After all, both teams had identical 99-63 records. New York won this thriller 5-4, bolstered by the Yanks' ninth-place batter, Bucky Dent, who sealed Boston's fate with an improbable three-run home run over Fenway's "Green Monster." Item #304.



1986 World Series Game 6

124 minutes, Color

New York Mets/
Boston Red Sox

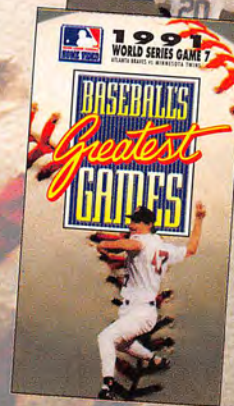
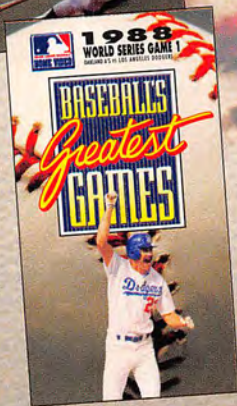
Yogi Berra's truism, "It ain't over till it's over," was never more in effect than in this game when the Miracle Mets incredibly vanquished the Boston Red Sox, 6-5, denying the Red Sox their first World Series championship in 68 years. Item #301.

1988 World Series Game 6

94 minutes, Color

Los Angeles Dodgers/Oakland A's

On paper, it looked like a complete mismatch, the powerful Oakland A's lineup against the overachieving Los Angeles Dodgers. But in the bottom of the ninth inning, of Game One, in one of the most dramatic moments in World Series history, Kirk Gibson pinch-hit a two-out, two-run homer off Oakland relief ace Dennis Eckersley to give the Dodgers a stunning victory. Item #305.



1991 World Series Game 7

93 minutes, Color

Minnesota Twins/Atlanta Braves

The Twins and Braves played in one of the greatest Series of all time. Five games were decided by only one run; three went extra innings. In the decisive Game Seven, Jack Morris pitched a masterful 10-inning shutout as the Twins proved victorious, 1-0. Item #303.



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PREVIEW

A Rotten Peach

DURING THE FILMING OF "Cobb" last spring, you couldn't be on the set for five minutes without hearing what you always hear when you're on the set of a baseball movie: "You know, this isn't really a baseball movie."

Baseball movies are always defensive about being baseball movies. Partly this is because of something else you always hear on the set of baseball movies: Sports movies don't make money. That's what anyone in Hollywood will tell you: "Oh, those things never show a profit." Hollywood people sound a lot like baseball executives. Nothing they do ever shows a profit.

Hollywood has been making baseball movies since before there was a World Series—in fact, since before there was a Hollywood. Thomas Edison made the first baseball movie in 1903, and there have been more than 400 filmed since then. You'd think somebody was making money somewhere along the line. "Pride of the Yankees," "It Happens Every Spring," "Fear Strikes Out," "Damn Yankees," "Bull Durham," "Field of Dreams"—it's hard to believe none of those movies showed a profit.

The \$25 million screen biography of Ty Cobb, which opens later this month, was directed by Ron Shelton, who wrote and directed "Bull Durham" and "White Men Can't Jump." Those were two of the most

successful sports movies—with a combined gross of perhaps \$250 million—never to show a profit. Of course, "Bull Durham" and "White Men Can't Jump" weren't just sports movies. They were movies about love, sex, race, friendships, and the uniquely American way sports tie into all those things.

That said, we must agree that "Cobb" isn't really a baseball movie—certainly not in the usual sense, and not even in the sense that "Bull Durham" was a baseball movie. Ty Cobb was perhaps the most demonic figure ever to appear on a baseball field. For Cobb, baseball wasn't a game; it was conflict, and the conflict involved not just his opposition, but teammates, umpires, and fans as well. "Cobb" is about unrelenting rage and competi-

tive drive, and how the man failed to channel those forces into anything constructive off the field. It's about life as war.

As a player, Cobb slashed the legs of infielders foolish enough to challenge his

The making of "Cobb" proved to be a lesson in deconstructing a hero—and perhaps a movie genre as well

By ALLEN BARRA



STINEY BALDWIN/WARNER BROS.

The film's crew strived to recreate the look of the era but left it to Jones [right] to capture the essence of the man.

UPI/BRETTMAN

PREVIEW

Albert Belle threw a ball at one. Cobb did them both one better. He went after and beat up a heckler *who didn't have use of his hands*.

The "amputee heckler," as the script called him, is played by Buffett, who happens to be a friend of the producer. Buffett thoroughly enjoyed his acting debut. "When Ron explained the scene to me, I thought 'What a blast; let's get going,'" Buffett said. "Then Tommy Lee Jones came over the fence, up into the stands, screaming and breathing fire." Was Jones convincing? "I was convinced," Buffett said. "I left a puddle on my seat to prove it."

The baseball sequences for "Cobb" were filmed in historic Rickwood Field in Birmingham, Ala., the oldest standing professional baseball park in the world. All the in-park scenes are convincing. In fact, even though only a small portion of the film deals with Cobb's playing career, a disproportionate share of the budget went toward achieving period authenticity. Pre-World War I product signs—Coca-Cola, Safety Razors, et al.—cover the outfield fences. (Anyone who decries the amount of advertising in ballparks nowadays should check out photos of old parks, many of which packed

even if their careers had overlapped in the '50s, they couldn't have met in Rickwood, which was the home field for two separate teams: the Barons and the Black Barons.

Ironically this segregated double-duty allowed Rickwood to host more quality players than perhaps any other professional park. Cobb, Babe Ruth, Joe DiMaggio, Ted Williams, Warren Spahn, Dizzy Dean, Shoeless Joe Jackson, Christy Matthewson, and a score of other old-time major league greats played there either as minor-leaguers or in exhibition games. Rickwood also saw the likes of Negro League legends Satchel Paige, Josh Gibson, Cool Papa Bell, and Piper Davis.

In the modern era, many of the players who would form the core of the world champion Oakland A's teams in the early '70s were nurtured at Rickwood, when the Southern League Barons were an A's farm team. Belle, Bo Jackson, Jose Canseco, and at least 10 other current big-leaguers played there.

Nowadays the Barons play in a shiny new park in the suburbs, where a prospect named Michael Jordan packed them in last summer. Recently, though, for some strange reason, Birmingham has awakened to Rickwood as the symbol of a past it often has denied. As one puzzled Chamber of Commerce employee said, "If half the people who volunteered their services for Rickwood had lent some time to the Civil Rights Museum, we'd have had that three years sooner." Why the late rush to recognize Rickwood's history? Probably because baseball always has been a symbol of commonality in American life, even when the reality was segregation. We see innocence in the game that was played in Rickwood, even if the game was not so innocent as we would believe.

With no professional team playing at Rickwood and no solid economic base in the area, the field is doomed, despite the occasional Hollywood movie filmed there. No matter how cheery the boosters with their FRIENDS OF RICKWOOD T-shirts, they seem to know it, too—which, of course, only makes their optimism more admirable. Someday, someone who remembers there was a ballpark at that site will ride by and voice some variation of Roger Kahn's words when he confronted the Brooklyn apartment building where Ebbets Field once stood: "Sweet Moses, white or black, who will remember?" Here's hoping "Cobb" does its part to help us remember.

Mary McCord-Short, who does PR for the nearby University of Alabama at Birmingham, walked into Rickwood dressed in a black three-



SIMONE BALDWIN/WARNER BROS.

Shelton [right] reveals the game's darker side in a film that "isn't a baseball movie per se."

right of passage; he would sit on the dugout steps and sharpen his spikes with a file, grinning as opposing players walked by and tried to ignore the sound of grinding metal. At bat or on the bases he would bait opponents mercilessly, trying to unnerve them into mistakes. Woe to the man with a drinking problem or troubles at home—everything was fair game to Cobb.

Off the field, Cobb was no better. He beat two wives, attacked blacks without provocation, and alienated three children. He once took a train to Princeton, N.J., just to horsewhip his son for flunking out of school. Ernest Hemingway, not exactly squeamish in his choice of companions, may have summed up Cobb best. "The greatest of ballplayers," Hemingway told friends. "And an absolute shit."

That, in slightly more graphic imagery, is one of the things pop singer Jimmy Buffett calls Tommy Lee Jones, who plays Cobb, in a scene in the movie. Babe Ruth once went into the stands after a heckler; many years later

twice the number of billboards into half the stadium space.) NO BETTING signs, ironically common in a period when wagering on baseball was rife, obscure the modern chain-link fences. An old-fashioned "punch board" scoreboard keeps track of games involving the Philadelphia Athletics, Boston Braves, and St. Louis Browns—teams long since relocated.

The players wear old-fashioned heavy wool uniforms that on a hot day soak up perspiration like sponges. On location, actor Gary Talbert walked by in a dark uniform, drying himself with a towel. Wait—isn't he playing a member of the home team? "I am," he said, wiping his brow. "This uniform was *white* when I put it on five hours ago."

The presence of former big-league players and current Birmingham residents "Harry the Hat" Walker and Bob Veale also add authenticity to "Cobb." Walker, the National League batting champion in 1947, retired in 1955. Veale won 120 big-league games from 1962 to '74, and he's now head groundskeeper at Rickwood. However,

piece pin-striped suit with a bowler hat. McCord-Short usually doesn't dress that way, but on this day she was an extra, one of the few hundred who answered the call to come to Rickwood for crowd scenes. "But there aren't enough of us," she lamented. "They caught Birmingham at a time when most students are out of town, and most local people don't have any place to park. I hope they have some kind of special effects to cover this."

They do. Enter the "Tys" and "Babes": two-dimensional photo standups that pass for spectators when placed on a ballpark seat. Most are one of two types: a slender, bow-tied fellow in a straw hat—the crew called him "Ty"—and a heavysset guy in a newsboy cap, a dead-ringer for Ruth. You can see Tys and Babes in several baseball movies, particularly "The Babe," which starred John Goodman. They're popular; they work cheap, and unlike actors they don't have unions or agents. Unfortunately, they lack a certain expressiveness.

To get around the shortage of flesh-and-blood extras, Shelton devised a simple solution. During a scene in which the crowd boos Cobb and pelts him with garbage, the live crowd seated amid the Tys and Babes rose and yelled at Shelton's command; then the crowd moved to another section of the stands, and the process was repeated. Once the separate crowd shots are spliced with cuts to a sullen-looking Jones, the effect is that of a camera sweeping a stadium filled with thousands of angry spectators.

Shelton, who played minor league ball

the major leagues. He must have been booted here.

"Just imagine—his nickname was 'the Georgia Peach.' Peach! That's amazing. Who could have given him that for a nickname?"

Shelton's affection for the game's history is why Rickwood Field was chosen in the first place—and interestingly, *INSIDE SPORTS* played a small part in the decision. "You're part of the reason," Shelton said. "I saw a piece in *INSIDE SPORTS* a couple of years ago on Rickwood and the players who had been here [June 1992, written by this writer]. We were thinking about shooting in Georgia, but the further along we got into production, the more I realized we

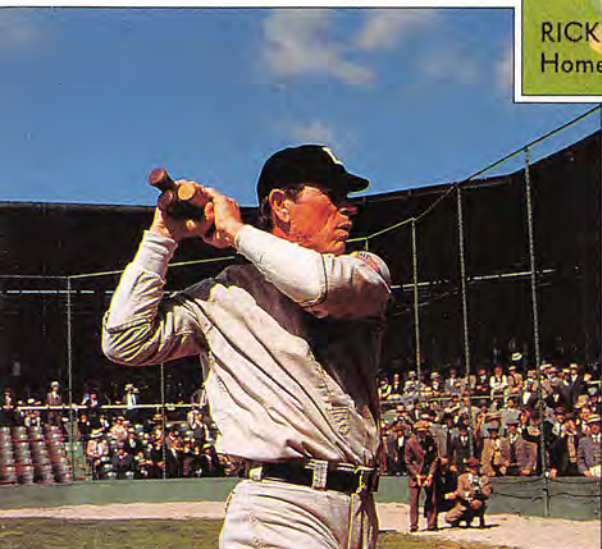
Judging from the script and the sources from which it was taken, "Cobb" is a movie about a man possessed by anger; a psychotic who played out his rage on a baseball field and then, when his playing days were over, took it out on everyone around him. "If I had to compare what we're doing here with another film, I don't know what it would be," Shelton said. How about "Raging Bull"?

Shelton paused, then said: "That movie has such a reputation. I hate to sound presumptuous to compare my film to Martin Scorsese's, and I haven't even finished this one yet, but, yes, if I had to suggest something that 'Cobb' may be like, I hope it would be 'Raging Bull.'"



RICKWOOD FIELD
Home of Birmingham Barons

COURTESY OF THE BIRMINGHAM BARONS



SIDNEY BALDWIN/WARNER BROS.

for five seasons before going to Hollywood to write screenplays, found it amusing that such a scene might actually have happened in Rickwood perhaps 70 or 80 years ago. "Cobb played here," Shelton said. "He played barnstorming tours here, and he played just as hard in those games as in

the American character that goes straight from Walt Whitman to baseball. It was about how men try to extend their youth through sports, how they can't give up the dreams they had as boys. But, OK, 'Bull Durham' was a baseball movie. But 'Cobb' is not."

The reel version and the real Cobb both took cuts at Rickwood.

had to shoot the baseball scenes on a field where Cobb actually played."

In the version of the script we were privy to, baseball played only a small part in the overall story. "Well, that's true," Shelton said. "'Cobb' isn't a baseball movie per se. No, I mean it. Look, I made a baseball movie, 'Bull Durham,' and I said it was a baseball movie. It was about a lot of other things, of course—it was about sex, religion, the line

In that case, how about this title: "Raging Peach"? Shelton stared for a moment. "I'll get back to you on that one, OK?"

When a Grade-A tornado swept through outlying areas of Birmingham and killed 15 across the state—a headline in a small-town Alabama paper afterward read HURRICANE KILLS EIGHT IN CHURCH COLLAPSE, INTERRUPTS FILMING OF 'COBB'—conditions sent the crew inside a warehouse to shoot a scene between the aging Cobb and Al Stump, the sportswriter who worked on Cobb's story over the last few months of Cobb's life. Stump's article, "Ty Cobb's Wild, Ten Day Fight to Live," is considered one of the classics of modern sportswriting, and Algonquin Books has issued a new edition of his full-length biography of Cobb.

Stump is played by Robert Wuhl, who

PREVIEW

has become a fixture in Shelton's films. He played a coach in "Bull Durham" and also appeared in "Blaze," Shelton's film about the love affair between Louisiana Gov. Earl Long and stripper Blaze Starr. A baseball fanatic, Wuhl pores over numbers for his Rotisserie team when he's not studying lines. He greeted the crew each day with a baseball-related joke. The typical punchline could jeopardize *INSIDE SPORTS'* reputation as a family publication, but suffice it to say that men guffawed, women giggled, and everyone was loosened up.

For this scene, Jones played Cobb as a man of 70 with cancer. The transformation from the prime athlete to the dying Cobb is startling—all the more so because Jones didn't wear much makeup. "That's deliberate," he said in a sharp, Deep South accent that carried more than a trace of Cobbian irritability. "I want this to be about acting, not makeup." It is—Jones' makeup made him look pale, but mostly he affected Cobb's age and illness through a stoop, a shortness of breath, and a scratchy shrillness in his voice.

The scene involves Stump's discovery that Cobb secretly was supporting several old-time ballplayers, among them Hall of Fame catcher Mickey Cochrane. A more conventional actor might have played the scene for sentimentality, to reveal the "nicer" side of Cobb. Instead, Jones turned on the heat, making the episode one more manifestation of Cobb's fierce pride. As the scene ended, Jones, still in character, acknowledged the crew's applause with a curt nod of the head.



In his later days Cobb [right] assisted struggling old-timers such as Cochrane...

Jones' interpretation reflected his refusal to mythologize the man. "I think it's essential that it not be played to soften Cobb's character," he said. "The point is that the old-time players were the only ones Cobb had any affinity with at that point in his life. Mickey Cochrane wasn't his friend—I really don't think Cobb had any friends near the end—but he felt a camaraderie with them, maybe the way fighter pilots [from opposite sides] felt toward each other during World War I."

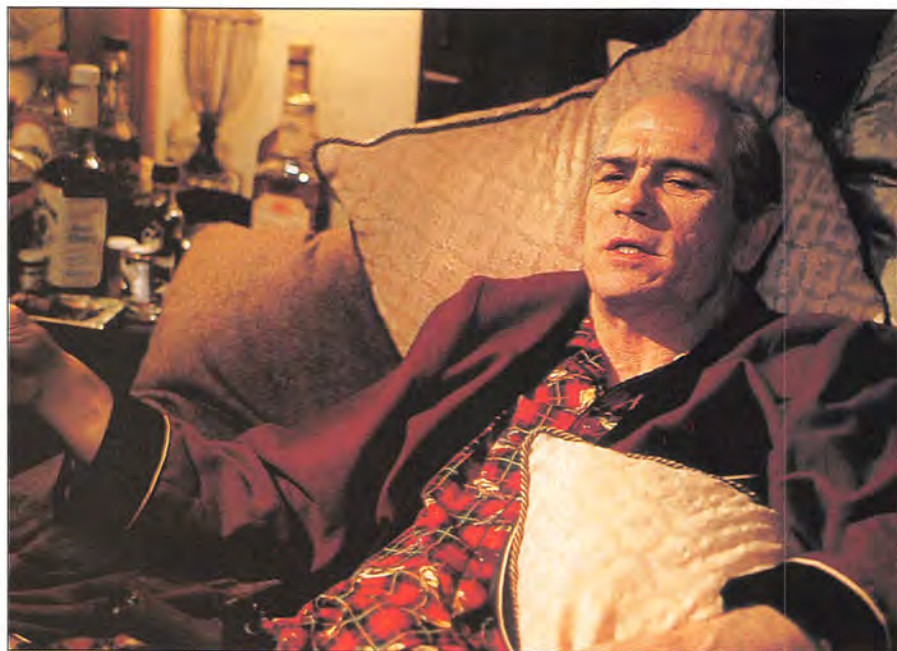
Have today's more tolerable playing con-

ditions—when games are played, that is—undercut the players' sense of being survivors together? "That might have a lot to do with it," Jones said. "Baseball back then was a rough game, a dirty game, far more so than today. Players who were in the big leagues together for a few years probably felt like they had been through a war together. When Cobb was old, he at least had the respect of those men he had played against. He probably didn't have anything else.

"He hated the 'new' kind of baseball, the game Babe Ruth ushered in that stressed power over speed and guile. And he hated the game for allowing blacks into it. Consequently, he alienated himself from the only thing he ever truly loved: baseball. At the end the only thing he had left was his own rage. He fed on it."

We told Jones our suggested title for the film: "Raging Peach." For our efforts we received a rare treat: For a split second, we were the target of the full, demonic glare of Ty Cobb.

When outside shooting resumed, Talbert and fellow actor George Raft loosened up with a catch. Talbert, a former minor-leaguer, nursed a bruised eye from a botched catch in an earlier scene. "Damn ball went right through my glove," he said. "There's no webbing on the damn things at all. How the hell did they catch anything back then?" Raft told him, "Just be glad we're not making an old-time football movie."



...but Jones sees pride and rage, not sentimentality, behind those last acts.

SHIRLEY BALDWIN/WARNER BROS.

Meanwhile, Jones was filmed in a typical Cobb at-bat, wherein the star baits the umpire before he even steps into the batter's box: "Good afternoon, Mr. Cyclops. It's a fine ball game you been missin'." Then it's on to the catcher. "I believe these belong to your wife, sir," he says as he drops a pair of panties on home plate. "She left 'em in my car last night."

The next scene involves a fight in which Cobb takes on his nemesis, Ruth. Jones seemed to relish the prospect, warming up the crew and the extras for the big brawl. The actor who played Ruth is a good 30 pounds heavier and 20 years younger than Jones, but when they finally collided it looked convincing enough. Soon both teams were on the field, rolling over each other, throwing fake punches, and causing enough damage to the vintage uniforms to put the film's costume designer into cardiac arrest.

"My goodness," Walker said, "they scrap pretty good—for a bunch of actors." Sniffed Veale: "Would've lasted about one minute in my league."

The kind of baseball played in Walker's day, and even in Veale's, never has made it to a movie screen before. In truth, baseball movies are only rarely about real baseball. "Angels in the Outfield" is about angels. "Damn Yankees" is about devils. "Field of Dreams" is about ghosts. "Major League," in which a bunch of castoffs in Cleveland Indians uniforms win the World Series, has as much to do with real baseball as "The Three Stooges on Mars" has to do with the space program.

"Cobb" is a movie about real life, the ingredient missing from nearly every other film ever made about baseball. Fanciful as it was, "Bull Durham" was perhaps the first movie that had no childish illusions about the game. That's not to say Shelton's minor-leaguers don't have childish illusions—but those illusions are part of the point Shelton is making about American men.

In "Cobb" the point he wants to make is a great deal more grim. It's a film that probably couldn't have been made in an earlier day, when audiences had yet to achieve a sufficient distance from the institutionalized racism that permitted Ty Cobb to be a national hero. "Cobb" makes most other movies based on American sports figures seem childish. It's a genuine rarity: a movie about a sports icon that is made for adults. It will be interesting to see how the public responds. ■

Senior writer ALLEN BARRA was on location in Alabama last spring during the filming of "Cobb." He previewed the 1994 Heisman Trophy race in the September issue.



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Surprisingly, the undefeated 1972 Miami Dolphins had the toughest postseason of any Super Bowl champ, as judged by the average margin of victory in the playoffs and Super Bowl. Don Shula's perfect squad won its three postseason games by an average of just 5.7 points. The '72 Fish also were the second-lowest scoring Super Bowl champ, averaging just 18.3 points in the postseason. The most formidable Super Bowl juggernaut? The '89 San Francisco 49ers, who rolled over their postseason opponents by an average of more than 33 points a game—culminating in a 55-10 thrashing of the Denver Broncos in Super Bowl XXIV. Here is the average postseason margin of victory for each Super Bowl winner:



TWO YEARS AFTER

The Chicago Bulls opened camp this season with just three players—Scottie Pippen, B.J. Armstrong, and Will Perdue—remaining from their '92-93 NBA title team. That's by far the most radical two-year overhaul of a championship team in recent NBA history. No other champ since the NBA-ABA merger in 1976-77 has had fewer than six of its title players on the roster two years down the road. Here's how NBA champs since 1976-77 have looked in terms of the number of players from the title team on the roster (for at least part of the season) two years later:

Season	Champion	Players remaining two seasons later	Finish two seasons later
1992-93	Chicago Bulls	3	—
1991-92	Chicago Bulls	8	Lost in conference semifinals
1990-91	Chicago Bulls	9	Won NBA championship
1989-90	Detroit Pistons	8	Lost in first round
1988-89	Detroit Pistons	9	Lost in conference finals
1987-88	Los Angeles Lakers	6	Lost in conference semifinals
1986-87	Los Angeles Lakers	7	Lost in NBA Finals
1985-86	Boston Celtics	6	Lost in conference finals
1984-85	Los Angeles Lakers	6	Won NBA championship
1983-84	Boston Celtics	7	Won NBA championship
1982-83	Philadelphia 76ers	8	Lost in conference semifinals
1981-82	Los Angeles Lakers	9	Lost in NBA Finals
1980-81	Boston Celtics	8	Lost in conference semifinals
1979-80	Los Angeles Lakers	6	Won NBA championship
1978-79	Seattle SuperSonics	6	Sixth place, Pacific Division
1977-78	Washington Bullets	7	Lost in first round
1976-77	Portland Trail Blazers	6	Lost in first round

Note: Figures include players on the roster but unable to play that season due to injury. Gus Williams, a member of Seattle's '78-79 title team, held out for the '80-81 season; he is not included in the Sonics' total for that year.

STRIKING STATS

Matt Williams' 43 home runs in 1994 would have led the National League in 65 of the previous seasons this century—despite the fact that Williams played in just 112 games. Randy Johnson's 204 K's would have paced the AL 42 times. Here's how baseball's 1994 leaders would have fared in previous seasons since 1901 (not including the strike-interrupted 1981 campaign):

	League leader	1994 total (latest year in which total would have led league)	No. of seasons in which 1994 total would have led league
HOME RUNS	AL Ken Griffey Jr.	40 (1989: 36)	52
	NL Matt Williams	43 (1992: 35)	65
RBIs	AL Kirby Puckett	112 (1976: 109)	14
	NL Jeff Bagwell	116 (1992: 109)	19
RUNS	AL Frank Thomas	106 (1976: 104)	17
	NL Jeff Bagwell	104 (1989: 104)	15
HITS	AL Kenny Lofton	160 (—)	0
	NL Tony Gwynn	165 (1919: 164)	2
DOUBLES	AL Chuck Knoblauch	45 (1990: 45)	53
	NL Craig Biggio	44 (1991: 44)	61
TRIPLES	AL Lance Johnson	14 (1993: 14)	36
	NL Brett Butler	9 (—)	0
TOTAL BASES	AL Albert Belle	294 (1974: 287)	13
	NL Jeff Bagwell	300 (1942: 292)	16
WALKS	AL Frank Thomas	109 (1987: 106)	21
	NL Barry Bonds	74 (1926: 69)	2
STOLEN BASES	AL Kenny Lofton	60 (1991: 58)	64
	NL Craig Biggio	39 (1961: 35)	34
STRIKEOUTS	AL Randy Johnson	204 (1984: 204)	42
	NL Andy Benes	189 (1957: 188)	32
SAVES	AL Lee Smith	33 (1982: 28)	32
	NL John Franco	30 (1983: 29)	29

RBIs since 1907; walks since 1910 NL, 1913 AL; saves since 1947.

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THE GOOD DOCTOR

Doc, do you think Dream Team II could defeat Dream Team I?

D.W., EXPERIMENT, GA.

Yes I do—when everybody on Dream Team I is, oh, around 65 years old.

How many golf tournaments do you think Nick Price will win next year?

L.T., EAGLE GROVE, IOWA

How many are there?

Ihear radio show host Howard Stern has the solution to the nation's No. 1 problem. What's he doing, running for governor of New York again?

R.C., JOHN DAY, ORE.

No, he's running for baseball commissioner.

My family and I would like you to show us more in your magazine about sports here in North Dakota.

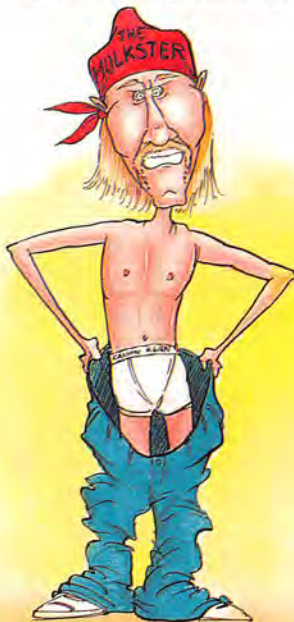
T.S., BEULAH, N.D.

I'd be thrilled to.

How is Hulk Hogan looking now that he has quit using steroids?

A.S., ULYSSES, KAN.

The Hulkster now weighs 98 pounds and is modeling underwear for Calvin Klein.



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Kate Moss? I'll tie her in knots!..."**

One of my neighbors wrote asking you to put more in your magazine about sports here in North Dakota. You can ignore him if you'd like.

F.B., CANNON BALL, N.D.

I'd be thrilled to.

The first Super Bowl must have had an opening coin flip. What happened to the coin?

W.G., YUKON, OKLA.

Bruce McNall sold it to somebody for \$1 million, claiming it was from ancient Greece.

Phil Rizzuto gave a lovely speech at his Hall of Fame induction. How long did it take him to deliver it?

H.C., KULPMONT, PA.

Longer than it took him to be elected.

Donald Fehr, the labor negotiator for the major league baseball players, is an interesting guy. What do you know about him, Doc?

R.R., ENUMCLAW, WASH.

Glad you asked. Don Fehr grew up in Wildcat Strike, Nev., a mining town, where his uncle Underwood (Un) Fehr organized a walkout among prospectors that lasted well into the 1849 gold rush. Don's nephew, Stanley (Stay) Fehr, is a coach who did some work with Carlton Fisk. His cousin, State Fehr, raised prize-winning Iowa hogs. And, as you probably know, Don's stepbrother was popular former NBA player World B. Fehr.

What should the city of Seattle do about the roof at the Kingdome?

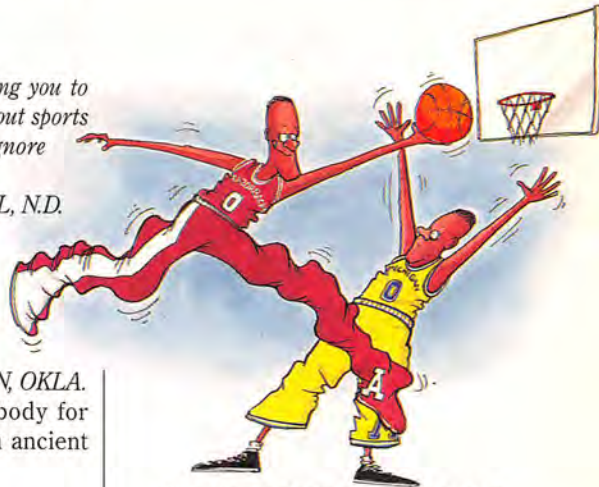
T.F., UMATILLA, ORE.

Put better teams under it.

Friends told me they saw pitcher Jack McDowell and his rock band performing at Woodstock '94. What songs did Jack and his buddies play?

N.N., JEFFERSON FARMS, DEL.

A medley of White Sox hits: "The Big Hurt," "Rockin' Robin Ventura," "Guillen From Ipanema," "Reinsdorf Is Fallin' on My Head," and "Me and Julio Franco Down by the Schoolyard."



Who wears short shorts? Nobody.

Hey, Doc, which college basketball team has the longest shorts this season, Arkansas or Michigan?

S.F., VAN LEAR, KY.

The winner and still champion: Arkansas. Michigan's new pants go down to their ankles, but the Razorbacks now wear shorts that go under their shoes. Congratulations, and watch your step.

What are Martina Navratilova's plans now that she has retired from tennis?

C.E., ANNA MARIA, FLA.

Two words: Birmingham Barons.

New York newspapers keep reporting that after quarterback Phil Simms was released by the Giants, he went "into the booth." Where exactly is this booth, and what exactly was Simms doing in it?

T.V., ENFIELD, N.H.

It's a pay phone, and he was calling the Giants once every hour, then hanging up on them.

Iheard Jim Courier was thinking of taking a leave of absence from tennis to play basketball in the NBA. Why haven't I seen him on the hardwood?

D.S., GREENLAWN, N.Y.

They wouldn't let him keep his cap on.

Emmitt Smith owns a sports memorabilia shop. What does he sell?

T.A., EL RENO, OKLA.

Mostly the "Jimmy" line of merchandise: Jimmy Johnson bobbing-head dolls, Jimmy

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Kirby Puckett runs his own billiards tournament. Is pool Kirby's favorite game after baseball?

K.H., ZUMBROTA, MINN.

So much so that now he chalks up his bat.

Frank and Kathie Lee Gifford always are gabbing about their boy, Cody. What's he doing that makes Mom and Dad so proud?

R.P., GLADEWATER, TEXAS

Quarterbacking the Oilers.

Bob Knight, the basketball coach at Indiana, went hunting during the off-season. What did Bobby bag?

D.I., WINCHESTER, IND.

His limit: five badgers, five wildcats, five gophers, and five Nittany lions.

Could you tell me what that movie "True Lies" was about?

R.M., GREYBULL, WYO.

Nevada-Las Vegas basketball.

Is it true that NFL quarterbacks-turned-TV-guys Joe Theismann and Terry Bradshaw are planning comebacks?

T.J., IVY WILD, COLO.

Yep. As soon as they heard about those new helmets with the microphones built in, Theismann and Bradshaw got excited. You know how much they love to hear themselves talk.

ESPN's Linda Cohn has signed to do a movie with baseball pitching star David Cone. What do they play?

D.A., ZEBULON, N.C.

Coneheads.

Lisa-Marie Presley got married to Michael Jackson! Wow! Why would she marry Michael Jackson?

E.P., KINGSTON, TENN.

I have no idea. He's been a pretty good wide receiver for the Cleveland Browns, but not that good. ■

In a fever to know what really goes on in the world of sports? Will you feel awful until you find out? Send for a diagnosis to: The Good Doctor, 990 Grove Street, Evanston, Illinois 60201—then wait patiently.

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Brian Moore	Park Ridge, NJ	230	\$150
Gregory Burke	Cincinnati, OH	228	\$100

Week #3		Pts	Prize
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T.F. Brancatella	Pierrefonds, PQ	228	\$100

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Chiya Kunihiro	Scarborough, ON	205	\$150
Ronald Beaver	Cedar Hill, TX	202	\$100

Week #5		Pts	Prize
Michelle Cecil	Warren, MI	191	\$300
Kathleen Gough	Blue Anchor, NJ	184	\$150
T.C. McCarthy	Forest Hills, PA	183	\$100

INSIDE
SPORTS



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THE FAN

By DABNEY COLEMAN

The Perfect Enemy

WHEN I WAS GROWING up in Corpus Christi, Texas, I was a huge New York Yankees fan. I hated the Boston Red Sox, and especially Ted Williams. One day late in 1946, I read in the paper that Williams had been signed by 20th Century-Fox to make movies. I thought that meant no more baseball, and I screamed. My mother came running out of the kitchen. "My god, what is it?" she asked. "Ted Williams is going to be a movie star!" I said. "He's not going to play baseball anymore."

I was crying so hard my mother thought my life was in danger, but I had had some sort of epiphany. You see, I didn't just dislike Ted Williams, I hated him—but until that moment I didn't realize what high regard I had for him, or for the competition he offered my Yankees.

I had never seen a regular big-league game, so I asked Dr. Francis Kelly, the man who introduced me to baseball, if he could help me out. The closest big-league city was St. Louis, where both the Browns and the Cardinals played. St. Louis was a hell of a ride from Corpus Christi, so Dr. Kelly set up an overnight train trip. I had a roomette on a Pullman. I was 17 years old, just 5'6" and 119 pounds, and very shy. It all seemed bigger than life.

Both St. Louis teams played at Sportsman's Park. That was a small stadium—it only seated about 34,000—but when I got there in the rain and first saw it I thought, "God almighty!" It might as well have been the Taj Mahal. I walked upstairs into the main office building and asked for tickets for the next 14 days. "Which games?" they asked. "All of 'em," I said. I got good seats, behind the visiting team's dugout.

After I got the tickets, I went down to the dugout. A security guard was standing there. He saw me, and he knew what I was



As a young Yankees fan I hated Ted Williams, but of all the great players I saw, he stood out. Such ease and grace!

doing. I went into the dugout, and I stood where Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig must have stood, right by the bat rack.

The rain was coming down, and I was looking over the park. I had goosebumps all over. I went out onto the mound, and I pantomimed throwing like Bob Feller—a nice high kick and a strong pushoff. Then I went to the plate and pretended to bat like Joe DiMaggio. The guard was watching me the whole time, and looking around to see if anybody was watching him watching me and not doing his job. Then he grinned, and I realized he was letting me get away with something he wasn't supposed to. All he said was, "Enjoy the game, son."

In those two weeks I saw just about every great player you could name, but Ted Williams—the enemy—was the one who stood out. I wrote a postcard to Dr. Kelly about him: "This guy Ted Williams, he looks like he invented the game. One day Williams discovered he could hit a ball better than anyone else and said, 'I am going to make a game around this hitting the ball with a stick and call it baseball!'"

Such ease and grace! I saw Stan Musial, and I saw Joe DiMaggio, too—great ballplayers, no question about it, but with them there was just a little bit more effort. With Williams, it looked like he was out

there on a practice field in a city park, just playing around. It was effortless and completely graceful.

I never was an autograph seeker, but after the game I saw Williams striding out of the locker room in a brown suit, no tie, and brown-and-white dress shoes. There were about 12 of us, and I was the last guy in line. He would not sign an autograph for anybody who got in front of him. Some kid said, "I came all the way from Kansas City, Ted!" "I don't care where ya came from," Williams shot back. "Don't get in front of me." He turned around and looked me square in the eye. "How about you, son? Let me sign yours." I didn't have anything for him to sign, and I couldn't open my mouth, so I shook my head no. I was scared, but I had made

eye contact with Ted Williams. He spoke to me. "How about you, son?"

Williams intimidated people. He'd break bats and chew people out, and wouldn't do interviews or tip his cap to the crowd. He had a hell of a temper, and he was quite a rebellious guy—still is. That and his perfectionism are what I admire about him, and I took that temperament into tennis and acting. When I played Slap Maxwell, an irascible sportswriter, on TV a few years back, that attitude came into play.

In fact, Williams agreed to appear on that show in our second year. I wrote him a letter explaining the story: Ted, Slap's hero, is in a bar, and everyone in town gets to meet him—except Slap, who feigns disinterest. Slap is the one who most wants to meet him, but he has too much pride. Finally Williams gets up, walks by, and says, "Keep up the good work, Slap," and Slap nearly faints.

Unfortunately we didn't get renewed; otherwise, Ted Williams would have done the show. That's my only regret about the show being canceled. ■

In addition to numerous film roles, DABNEY COLEMAN has starred in TV's "Buffalo Bill," "The Slap Maxwell Story," and this season's "Madman of the People."

Harry Connick, Jr.—
She (Columbia) 488•437
Joe Diffie—Third Rock
From The Sun (Epic)
489•260

Grover Washington,
Jr.—All My Tomorrows
(Columbia) 489•138

AC/DC—Dirty Deeds
Done Dirt Cheap
(Atlantic) 488•866

Jackyl—Push Comes
To Shove (Geffen)
488•544

Steve Perry—For The
Love Of Strange
Medicine (Columbia)
488•445

George Howard—A
Home Far Away
(GRP) 488•197

Diamond Rio—Love A
Little Stronger (Arista)
487•611

Hootie & The Blowfish
—Cracked Rear View
(Atlantic) 487•553

Take 6—Join The Band
(Reprise) 487•173

David Ball—Thinkin'
Problem (Warner Bros.)
487•066

Tony Bennett—
Unplugged (Columbia)
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Kiss Regrooved.
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Gin Blossoms, more.
(Mercury) 485•763

Sammy Kershaw—
Feelin' Good Train
(Mercury/Nashville)
485•730

Tracy Byrd—No
Ordinary Man (MCA)
484•758



Inner Circle—Reggae
Dancer
(Big Beat/Atlantic)
101•659

Spin Doctors—Turn It
Upside Down (Epic)
482•638

Travis Tritt—Ten Feet
Tall And Bulletproof
(Warner Bros.) 480•244

Al Jarreau—
Tenderness (Reprise)
477•471

Jeff Foxworthy—You
Might Be A Redneck If...
(Warner Bros.) 474•833

Joshua Kadison—
Painted Desert
Serenade (SBK) 474•791

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Green & Lyle Lovett,
Aaron Neville & Trisha
Yearwood, etc. (MCA)
474•536

Mavericks—What A
Crying Shame (MCA
Nashville) 474•403

Blackhawk
(Arista) 473•397



Alan Jackson—Who I Am.
Livin' On Love; title cut plus
others. (Arista) 486•233

Live—Throwing Copper
(Radioactive) 478•362

"Philadelphia"—Orig.
Sndtrk. Featuring B.
Springsteen, N. Young,
P. Gabriel, etc. (Epic
Soundtrax) 472•928

Frank Sinatra—Duets
(Capitol) 471•615

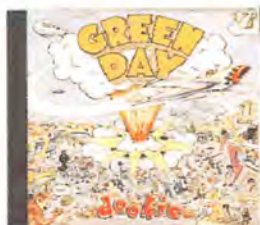
Stone Free: A Tribute
To Jimi Hendrix—
Various Artists (Reprise)
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Montgomery—Kickin' It
Up (Atlantic) 473•157

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Sleeps With Angels. Title cut,
plus others. (Reprise) 101•253



THE SCIENCE.

THE VALUE.

Reba McEntire—Read
My Mind (MCA
Nashville) 479•717

George Strait—Easy
Come, Easy Go
(MCA) 467•308

The Cranberries—
Everybody Else Is Doing
It, So Why Can't We?
(Island) 465•559

Garth Brooks—In
Pieces (Liberty) 463•745

The Black Crowes—
Shake Your Money-
maker (American)
462•184

Little Texas—Big Time
(Warner Bros.) 460•204

"Sleepless In Seattle"
—Orig. Sndtrk. (Epic
Soundtrax) 458•430

The Beavis & Butt-
head Experience.
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Aerosmith, etc.
(Geffen) 472•852

"The Crow"—Orig.
Sndtrk. Featuring
Pantera, Stone Temple
Pilots, etc. (Atlantic/
Interscope) 478•230

Stone Temple Pilots—
Core (Atlantic) 453•043

Rage Against The
Machine (Epic/
Associated) 451•138

Elton John—Grt. Hits
1976-86 (MCA) 450•353

Sade—Love Deluxe
(Epic) 449•439

Phil Collins—Serious
Hits...Live (Atlantic)
448•944

R.E.M.—Automatic For
The People (Warner
Bros.) 448•522

Blind Melon
(Capitol) 447•995

Eric Clapton—
Unplugged
(Reprise/Duck) 446•187

Alice In Chains—Dirt
(Columbia) 445•833

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And The Destroyers—
The Baddest Of The
Bad (Hits) (EMI) 444•505

Temple Of The Dog
(A&M) 442•780

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Your Illusion I (Geffen)
442•087

White Zombie—La
Sexorcisto (Geffen)
442•079

Nirvana—Nevermind
(DGC) 442•046

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—Come On, Come On
(Columbia) 440•560



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(Atlantic) 481•606

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Sky Is Crying (Epic)
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(Geffen) 458•075

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(Polydor) 471•060

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(Polydor) 471•011

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Band—A Decade Of
Hits 1969-79 (Polydor)
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Again Rod—Grt. Hits
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Jimmy Buffett—
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Eric Clapton—Time
Pieces (Polydor)
423•467

The John Lennon
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405•308

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tons From The Closet
(Warner Bros.) 378•406

Fleetwood Mac—Grt.
Hits (Warner Bros.)
375•782

Journey's Grt. Hits
(Columbia) 375•279

Steppenwolf—16 Grt.
Hits (MCA) 372•425

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Unplugged (Elektra)
469•775

Toad The Wet
Sprocket—Dulcinea
(Columbia) 482•166

Marvin Gaye's Grt. Hits
(Motown) 367•565

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(A&M) 364•448



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Woodstock (MCA)
488•098

The Mamas & The
Papas—16 Of Their
Greatest Hits (MCA)
348•623

Bad Company—10
From 6 (Atlantic)
341•313

A Decade Of Steely
Dan (Columbia) 341•073

Pantera—Far Beyond
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Masters (Chrysalis)
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(Elektra) 339•903

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(Asylum) 317•768

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(Chrysalis) 311•811

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Revival—Chronicle-20
Grt. Hits (Fantasy)
308•049

America's Grt. Hits
(Warner Bros.) 291•385

James Taylor's Grt.
Hits (Warner Bros.)
291•302

The Steve Miller
Band—Grt. Hits 1974-
78 (Capitol) 290•171

Bryan Adams—So Far
So Good (A&M)
467•738

Meat Loaf—Bat Out Of
Hell II: Back Into Hell
(MCA) 458•232

Eagles—Grt. Hits, 1971-
75 (Asylum) 287•003

Van Halen (Warner
Bros.) 286•807

Meat Loaf—Bat Out Of
Hell (Epic) 279•133

Boston (Epic) 269•209

Jim Croce—Photo-
graphs & Memories:
Grt. Hits (Saja) 246•868

Santana's Grt. Hits
(Columbia) 244•459

Carpenters—The
Singles 1969-73
(A&M) 236•885

Janis Joplin's Grt. Hits
(Columbia) 231•670

Simon & Garfunkel's
Greatest Hits
(Columbia) 219•477

Bob Dylan's Grt. Hits
(Columbia) 138•586

Reba McEntire—Grt.
Hits Vol. Two
(Columbia) 467•316

"The Bodyguard"—
Orig. Sndtrk. (Arista)
448•159

Spin Doctors—Pocket
Full Of Kryptonite
(Epic/Assoc.) 428•482

Pearl Jam—Ten (Epic/
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Ozzy Osbourne—No
More Tears (Epic/
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Weezer
(DGC) 101•691



Soundgarden—
Superunknown
(A&M) 475•186

Edie Brickell—Picture
Perfect Morning
(Geffen) 101•303

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Nowhere"—Orig.
Sndtrk. (A&M) 101•287

Patty Loveless—When
Fallen Angels Fly
(Epic) 101•048

Billy Joel®—River Of
Dreams (Columbia)
463•695

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Clay Walker (Giant) 467-449

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Red Hot Chili Peppers—Blood Sugar Sex Magik (Warner Bros.) 428-367

"Grease"—Orig. Sndtrk. (Polydor) 424-721

Guns N' Roses—Appetite For Destruction (Geffen) 339-984

U2—The Joshua Tree (Island) 354-449

Billy Joel—Grt. Hits, Vols. 1 & 2 (Columbia) 336-396/396-390

Sting—Ten Summoner's Tales (A&M) 454-561

Collective Soul—Hints, Allegations & Things Left Unsaid (Atlantic) 481-614

Indigo Girls—Swamp Ophelia (Epic) 477-323

Yanni—Live At The Acropolis (Private Music) 475-178

The Drifters' Golden Hits (Atlantic) 365-841

Bonnie Raitt—Luck Of The Draw (Capitol) 423-186

Soundgarden—Badmotorfinger (A&M) 428-250

Bon Jovi—Slippery When Wet (Mercury) 423-392

Pat Benatar—Best Shots (Chrysalis) 401-646

Aerosmith—Pump (Geffen) 368-009

Patsy Cline—Grt. Hits (MCA) 365-924

U2—Achtung Baby (Island) 431-213

Peter Gabriel—Shaking The Tree (Geffen) 415-968

Jimmy Buffett—Songs You Know By Heart (MCA) 339-911

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